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Nick Carter Stories

THE MELTING-POT

OR

NICK CARTER AND THE WALDMERE PLATE

NICK CARTER STORIES

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THE MELTING POT;

Or, NICK CARTER AND THE WALDMERE PLATE.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

AN OLD OFFENDER.

"Oh, no, I have not forgotten you. I never forget the face of a crook."

The speaker was Nick Carter. His voice, though somewhat under ordinary pitch, had a subtle and ominous ring. There was a threatening glint in the eyes he had fixed upon the face of the man he addressed.

It was a striking and impressive face, nearly as strong and impressive as that of the famous detective—but for directly opposite reasons.

Nick Carter's face was frank, manly, and wholesome.

That at which he was gazing was pallid, sinister, and severe. Its clean-cut features were as hard as flint. The thin-lipped mouth denoted cruelty and vicious determination. The square jaw and aggressive chin evinced firmness and bulldog tenacity. The cold gray eyes had a shifty gleam and glitter seen only in the eyes of what the detective had called this man—a crook.

He took up the epithet bitterly, saying, with a sneer:

"Crook, eh! You cannot prove it."

"I may sooner or later."

"You have tried—and failed."

"Failure never deters me from trying again. You know the old adage."

"You succeeded only in smirching my name, in giving me a bad reputation. It caused my friends to desert and avoid me. It excluded me from the clubs, the reputable hotels, from every desirable place that I had been accustomed to frequent. It has change my life and turned it as arid as the heart of a desert. I have you to thank for all this—you, Carter!"

"You are mistaken," Nick replied. "You have only yourself to thank for it."

"We view it differently."

"Where have you been for the past two years?"

"Not where you tried to put me."

"In Sing Sing."

"Yes."

"Nor have you been in New York, or I should have known it."

"You would have known it, too, if I had been arrested."

"Most likely—if arrested under your own name."

"You remember that, then, also."

"Both the face and name of a crook, Stuart Floyd, I always remember," said Nick. "I make it a point never to forget them."

Floyd's thin lips curled again with intense scorn and bitterness.

"That epithet again," said he between his teeth. "I have you to thank for it—and repay."

"Ah! I see now why you stopped me," said Nick. "You wanted to threaten me."

They had met in Madison Avenue; in fact, the detective having left his residence only a few moments before. It was about ten o'clock in the morning.

"Threaten you!" exclaimed Floyd, with ominous quietude. "There has been no day or night for two years that I have not threatened you."

"Indeed!"

"Have you supposed that I forgot, that my memory is less retentive than yours, that I have less cause than you to remember? Have you thought for a moment that I forget and forgive?"

"It matters very little to me, Floyd, whether you do or not," Nick calmly informed him, entirely unaffected by the subdued yet vicious intensity with which the other was speaking.

"Later, Carter, you will pipe a different tune," Floyd went on, with eyes vengefully gleaming. "I will not sleep until the debt is paid. I am going to put something over on you, Carter, that will more than balance our

account. Smile scornfully, if you will, but wait until I plunge you into the melting pot. It will come—take my word for that. It's you for the melting pot. You for the melting pot!"

Nick Carter did not ask him what he meant—did not seriously care. Nor did he attempt to detain him, though he glanced after him a bit sharply.

Stuart Floyd had stepped to one side, then walked briskly away without a backward glance, and he was quickly lost to view in the throng of pedestrians then in the avenue.

Nick Carter walked on as if nothing had occurred. The threat did not alarm him. He gave it hardly a second thought.

It was two years since he had seen Stuart Floyd, since he arrested him for complicity in the looting of the Imperial Loan Company by Morris Garland and Moses Hart, its two treacherous managers, the case involving the felonious pawning of Lady Waldmere's valuable jewels, held by them for collateral.

The prosecution, however, had not ended quite as Nick had expected. Both Garland and Hart were convicted and sent to the State's prison, where they still were confined.

The two women involved in the abduction of Lady Waldmere, Vera Vantoon and her sister, Leah, were given a year for that part of the crime. It could not be proved, however, that either was involved in the looting of the loan company. They since had served their time and been liberated.

Though Nick Carter was convinced of his guilt, moreover, Stuart Floyd had, with the help of an able criminal lawyer, contrived to slip through the fingers of justice. Both Garland and Hart had sworn that Floyd knew nothing about the looting, that he had acted only as their agent in the handling of the jewels, and that he was entirely ignorant of the abduction of Lady Waldmere.

Nick felt morally sure, however, that Stuart Floyd was back of the whole business, despite the fact that it could not be proved to the satisfaction of the jury that had acquitted him.

Nick was not surprised at Floyd's subsequent disappearance, for he had posed as a person of character and a popular man about town. The suspicion was one that would not down, however, and the stigma apparently had resulted in his disappearance, though none could say where he had gone. It was with some surprise, therefore, that the detective encountered him that morning.

Nick had not lost sight of Lord Waldmere and his wife in the meantime, and he was an occasional caller at the handsome residence bought in Riverside Drive by the Englishman, who had been cast out and disinherited because of his marriage with Mary Royal, at that time a beautiful American chorus girl.

Lord Waldmere's investments in Colorado mines had proved very profitable, however, and he fast was becoming further estranged from his native land and more and more infatuated with American life and customs, in part due to the wishes of his charming wife. He had dropped his English title, becoming simply Mr. Archie Waldmere, though his prestige had won him a legion of friends and admission into the first circles of society.

Nick Carter was informed on all of these points, and of all of the friends of the Waldmeres, none was more friendly and gratefully regarded than the famous detective.

It was with some little surprise, nevertheless, three days following his meeting with Stuart Floyd, that Nick received an urgent telephone summons to the Waldmere residence with his chief assistants, Chick Carter and Patsy Garvan.

The communication came from Mr. Waldmere himself, convincing Nick that something very serious had occurred. Without waiting to inquire into the details, however, he at once complied, in company with Chick and Patsy.

CHAPTER II.

THE STOLEN PLATE.

It was eleven o'clock when Nick Carter arrived with Chick and Patsy at the Waldmere residence that morning. The butler admitted them, while Lord Waldmere and his wife came hurrying through the broad, handsomely furnished hall to meet them.

"Come into the library," said Lord Waldmere, after their greeting. "By Jove, I'm deucedly glad you could come so quickly. I'm in a terrible state. I'm the victim of a beastly job, as you American detectives call them. 'Pon my word, Carter, I don't know whether I'm afoot or horseback. I'm infernally upset, don't you know——"

"Won't it be well, then, Waldmere, to let your wife tell me what has occurred?" Nick suggested, interrupting. "I infer that it is something of a criminal nature, or you would not require my services."

"That hits the bally nail on the nob," groaned the Englishman. "I have been jolly well robbed, Mr. Carter, jolly well robbed and——"

"Sit down, Archie, dear, and let me state the case," Mrs. Waldmere interrupted, after all had entered the finely furnished library. "I can inform Mr. Carter much more briefly than you, and he evidently feels that time may be valuable."

Lord Waldmere always yielded to his wife, at which none wondered, for her beauty and charm were quite irresistible.

"Archie has, as you already know, decided to remain permanently in America, or at least until a reconciliation has been effected with his family, of which there appears to be no prospect as long as his father, the Earl of Eggleston, lives."

"Yes, I know about that," Nick bowed.

"Archie not only has been successful in his mining ventures," Mrs. Waldmere continued, "but he also inherited from his mother, who was the earl's second wife, nearly all of her extensive estate.

"It comprised the London residence of her father, also the old manor house and estate in Dorsetshire, with all that they contained. This included a fine library, numerous costly paintings, portraits, and other furnishings, and also a large quantity of valuable silver and gold plate, which has been a heritage of the Waldmeres for two centuries. It is of the massive and beautifully engraved kind that we do not see in these days, and it is valued at something like a hundred thousand dollars."

"That's the blooming truth, Mr. Carter," nodded Waldmere. "I would jolly well rather have given a leg, old top, than have lost it."

"Lost it!" echoed Nick. "Do you mean that you have been robbed of the plate?"

"Yes, bah Jove, that's just what I mean. The bally stuff, you see, was——"

"One moment, Archie," Mrs. Waldmere interposed. "Let's state the facts briefly."

"Yes, do so," put in Nick attentively.

"After having bought this beautiful residence, which still is only partly furnished," she continued; "Archie decided to ship over here most of his English furnishings, including the library, the paintings and portraits, a quantity of costly rugs, tapestries, and draperies, and also all of the gold and silver plate."

"Ah, I see!" Nick nodded. "The plate has been stolen during transportation."

"Exactly."

"Tell me what you know about it."

"That can be briefly told. Archie wrote to his London agent, Mr. Cherry, a thoroughly reliable man, giving him all of the necessary directions. Mr. Cherry had the goods packed for shipment. They filled twenty large cases. These were marked and numbered to correspond with an inventory mailed to Archie, stating what each case contained."

"The inventory was duly received?" Nick questioned.

"Yes, it came nearly two weeks ago."

"Continue."

"The goods were shipped on the liner *Flodora*, which should have arrived in New York five days ago. As you may have read in the newspapers, however, she had a break in some part of her engine and was compelled to put into Boston, where her cargo was discharged and shipped to New York by rail. We were notified by New York agents on the day of her arrival, informing us how our shipment would be forwarded."

"I follow you," said Nick.

"To guard against any mishap, Mr. Carter, we then sent our chauffeur to Boston to engage a special car for our goods and to see that all of the twenty cases were put into it."

"What is his name?"

"Frank Gilbert. I have known him for years. He is strictly honest and capable. He remained in Boston and saw the twenty cases put into the freight car. He also saw that it was properly closed and sealed. The car was sent on an hour later, for the train was being made up at the time, and it arrived here and was sidetracked in the railway yard early this morning. We were notified by telephone and told that we could take away the goods."

"What more, Mrs. Waldmere?" Nick inquired.

"Following our instructions, Gilbert already had made arrangements with Macklin & Dale, the express company, to bring the cases to this house," she continued. "We telephoned to them at once, and were told that they would have a van at the car at ten o'clock. We sent Gilbert there at half past nine with the bill of lading, which the freight agent requires from strangers before he will deliver the goods. Gilbert arrived at the car at precisely ten o'clock. No dray was there."

"The truckman was late?"

"Something more than that. He was sent, as agreed, but was stopped on his way by a policeman, who claimed to identify him as a crook wanted by the authorities, and who detained him half an hour to question him."

"H'm, I see," Nick nodded. "Something more, indeed, Mrs. Waldmere."

"In the meantime, Mr. Carter, another wagon, bearing the firm name of the express company, went to the railway yard. Two men were in charge of it. They presented a forged bill of lading, stating that they had been sent to take away three of the cases, the numbers of which were specified, as soon as possible. One of the yard hands was sent to the car with them, and the cases were delivered to them about twenty minutes before Gilbert arrived. They were the three cases, Mr. Carter, that contained the valuable Waldmere plate."

"Yes, by Jove, and the bally rascals got away with them," cried Waldmere, in tones of bitter dismay. "I've been jolly well robbed, Mr. Carter, jolly well robbed of——"

"One moment, Waldmere," said Nick, checking him with a gesture. "Your wife has made this crime perfectly clear to me. Just how it was accomplished is not quite as plain. We must look into it. I infer, Mrs. Waldmere, there is nothing more of importance that you can add."

"No, nothing, Mr. Carter," she replied. "That's the whole story."

"That, on the contrary, is only the beginning of the story," corrected Nick. "Much must be done and with some risk, I anticipate, before the whole story is told. What, besides sending for me, have you done about the robbery?"

"Nothing," said Mrs. Waldmere. "Gilbert informed us of it by telephone. We directed him to have the car reclosed and locked pending an investigation, and I then advised Archie to telephone to you and place the case in your hands. He did so immediately."

Nick looked at his watch. It was nearly twelve o'clock. Two hours had passed since the crime was committed. It was obvious to him, of course, that the crooks had made a big haul and got safely away with their plunder.

Nick glanced expressively at Patsy Garvan after a moment, and the latter rightly read the look in his chief's eyes. He arose almost immediately and sauntered into the adjoining hall, closing the library door when he passed out of the room. He knew that Nick wanted to be sure that the following conversation was not heard by any of the servants.

"Before beginning an investigation, Mr. Waldmere, I wish to caution you and your wife to say nothing about any views I may express, neither to your friends nor in the hearing of your servants," said Nick, addressing both quite impressively. "Though you did not observe, I directed one of my assistants to close the door and wait for me in the hall. That will insure us against an eavesdropper."

"But, hang it, my dear Carter, I'm deucedly well sure that all of my servants are trustworthy," Waldmere quickly asserted. "I'pon my word, sir——"

"The word of one of them, or possibly more, may not be near as good as you think," Nick interrupted. "Permit me to be the judge, please, and do what I have directed."

"Certainly, Mr. Carter," put in Mrs. Waldmere. "You may depend upon it."

"It must be obvious to you, of course, that this theft was very carefully planned and quickly committed, with definite information of your designs and what was to be stolen. Otherwise, it could not possibly have been accomplished in the way it was done."

"Surely not, Nick," Chick nodded. "That's dead open and shut."

"To whom have you confided your intentions, Waldmere, outside of this house?" Nick inquired.

"Only to my London agent and the expressman I employed. But the latter cannot have known what the three cases contained."

"You have confided in none of your friends, or acquaintances?"

"No, not one."

"But you have discussed the matter here at times with your wife?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Your London agent is reliable, you say?"

"Absolutely," Waldmere declared. "There is no question about it."

"Obviously, then, the information obtained by the crooks must have been imparted by some one who overheard you discussing your designs, and who has been constantly informed of your intentions and what was being done. Naturally, of course, suspicion points to one of your servants."

"But——"

"Don't let's argue the point," Nick again interrupted. "Let me have my way, Waldmere, that we may get after the crooks as quickly as possible."

"Very well. It's up to you."

"Now, to proceed, how many servants do you employ?"

"Six," said Mrs. Waldmere. "Picard, our French chef. A woman in the kitchen, named Maggie Coyle."

"Young, or well along in years?"

"About fifty."

"Not likely, then, to be in such a job," said Nick. "Besides, her position in the house, as well as that of the chef, would have made it difficult for them to have learned all of the necessary details. They are out of it."

"We employ a butler, John Patterson," continued Mrs. Waldmere. "Also my maid, Della Martin, and a maid for general work, named Minerva Grand. All came well recommended. I have known our chauffeur, Frank Gilbert, for years, as I have said."

"They comprise your list of servants?"

"Yes."

"Has Gilbert returned from the railway yard?"

"He has and is waiting in the basement. He met the truckman sent by Macklin & Dale, and we directed him to bring him here, also, thinking you might wish to question both."

"I will do so," said Nick. "Have the truckman sent up here. I want both of you to wait in another room while I am talking with him, also with Gilbert, whom I will send for a little later. Do not ask my reasons, but kindly comply."

Waldmere looked a bit surprised, but he made no objection. He arose at once and left the room with his wife.

"Well, what do you make of it?" Chick inquired, while they waited for the truckman. "It looks to me like a bit of remarkably clever work."

Nick nodded and added:

"With inside help."

"You feel sure of that?"

"Reasonably sure," said Nick. "The circumstances point to absolutely definite information on the part of the crooks, much more so than if there had been only three cases shipped and all three stolen."

"That's true," Chick allowed.

"They must have known the numbers of the three cases containing the gold plate. They must have known that the location of those three particular cases in the freight car was such that they could quickly remove them, or they could not have figured so fine as to time. They got away with them, mind you, only twenty minutes before Gilbert arrived in the yard."

"That's right, too, by Jove."

"Furthermore—but here comes our man," Nick broke off abruptly. "We will size it up later."

The truckman had entered while the detective was speaking.

CHAPTER III.

NICK CARTER'S CRAFT.

Nick Carter needed only to glance at the face of the man who had entered to feel assured of his honesty. He was a rugged, red-cheeked Scotchman of nearly fifty years, clad in a checked blouse and overalls and carrying in one of his begrimed and calloused hands a faded woolen cap.

"Come nearer, my man," said Nick pleasantly. "What is your name?"

"Tom McLauren, sir," he replied, complying.

"How long have you been in the employ of Macklin & Dale?"

"Ten years, sir."

"I have been told on what job you were sent out this morning, also that you were detained by a policeman who——"

"That's wrong, sir," McLauren said quickly. "I may have said a policeman, sir, not thinking, but he was a plain-clothes man who stopped me."

"One you knew by sight?"

"No, sir. But he showed me his detective badge and——"

"I understand," Nick interrupted. "Where did he stop you?"

"In Forty-eighth Street, sir, when I was driving through from Second Avenue. He held me up and made me pull off to one side of the street, and then he began to question me, as much as saying that I was a crook he was looking for. I tried to convince him he was wrong, but the infernal bonehead wouldn't have it, and he threatened to take me down to headquarters, team and all, unless I answered his questions. He hung me up there for near half an hour, sir, until I got hot around my collar and told him he'd better pull a gink who went by just then, instead of me."

"Some one you knew?" questioned Nick.

"I know him by sight, sir, that's all."

"Why didn't you appeal to him, then, and have him vouch for you?"

"I'd have got fat, sir, doing that," said McLauren, with an expressive grin. "Surest thing you know, in that case, the dick would have collared me."

"You mean that the man who went by is a crook?"

"I reckon so, though I couldn't swear to it," said McLauren. "But he's a gangman, all right, and I've heard he's a gunman, as well. I only know him by sight, sir."

"Do you know his name?"

"I do."

"What is it?"

"Tim Bannon, sir, though he's better known as Bug Bannon, being a small, bow-legged chap with a head like a bullet."

"Humph!" grunted Nick, who knew all about the young gangster. "Did he say anything, or look at the man who had stopped you?"

"He did not. He was whistling and on the other side of the street."

"How much longer were you detained, McLauren?"

"Only a couple of minutes, sir. The dick seemed to see he was in wrong and he let me go."

"Describe him," said Nick.

"He looked all right, sir, as far as that goes," said the truckman. "He's a medium-built man, kind of pale, but with dark hair and a beard. He——"

"That's all, McLauren," Nick interrupted. "Send in Frank Gilbert when you go out. Wait until I have finished with him and I will give you further instructions."

"I hope you don't think, sir, that I——"

"I know that you had no hand in the robbery," Nick again cut in, anticipating what the other was about to say. "Do what I have directed and say nothing about my inquiries."

"I will not, sir," McLauren assured him, with a look of relief as he turned and left the room.

"By Jove, this looks as if——" Chick began.

He quickly checked himself, however, when the chauffeur, who had been waiting in the hall, entered and closed the door.

He was a tall, clean-cut man in the twenties, with a frank face and clear blue eyes, that met with convincing gaze the somewhat searching scrutiny of the detective.

"I wish to ask you only a few questions, Gilbert," said Nick. "Much may depend upon the information I obtain from you, however, so be very careful when replying. Don't overlook any little incident that may have occurred, however trivial it may seem to you."

"I understand you, Mr. Carter," bowed the chauffeur, taking the chair to which the detective waved him. "I will overlook nothing, sir."

"To begin with, then, have you told any person about the intentions of your employer, or why you were going to Boston?"

"Not one word, sir," said Gilbert. "I was for two years in the chorus with Miss Royal, now Lady Waldmere, and I have always felt a very sincere regard for her. I would cut out my tongue, or lose a hand, rather than harm her in any way."

"I believe you," said Nick. "Tell me, now, just what you did after arriving in Boston. Omit nothing of importance."

"I was there only one day," Gilbert replied. "I first went to the customhouse, where I saw the collector and gave a voucher for what the imported cases contain, and I got permission to have them sent to New York without delay."

"And then?"

"I then went to the pier where the *Flodora* was docked. I was fortunate in finding that all of the cases had been discharged from the liner, and I at once had them taken to the railway, to be put into a special freight car. A train was being made up when I arrived there, and I arranged for the car with the yardmaster, whom I found in his office in the freight house."

"Did you see the twenty cases put into the car?"

"I did, sir. I also saw the car closed and locked."

"Who handled the cases when transferred from the dray to the car?"

"The truckman, assisted by a train hand in the car."

"Who else was present?"

"Only one other man, sir, who directed the loading of the car. I supposed he was one of the yard hands employed for that kind of work. He appeared to have some authority."

"He appeared so to you?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And to the train hand, no doubt?"

"So far as I noticed. The train hand did what he was told."

"When and where did you first see this man?"

"He came along just as we were beginning to load the car. He at once began to tell the train hand where to put the cases. I supposed he wanted the car loaded in a certain way."

"That was a natural supposition," Nick allowed, smiling a bit oddly. "The train hand had much the same impression, no doubt."

"He appeared to, Mr. Carter."

"He probably inferred that this officious individual had an interest in the cases, and a right to say where they should be put," said Nick. "Never mind about that, however. Did you see the man after the car was closed and locked?"

"Only when we were leaving the yard."

"Did he leave with you?"

"He went as far as the freight house with me. Then he took the bill of lading given me by the freight agent, and told me to wait while he got a duplicate of it for the way-bill clerk. I did so, Mr. Carter, and he returned in about five minutes and gave me the bill of lading. I supposed he was one of the yard officials, and that was the last I saw of him."

"You returned to New York that night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Describe the man, Mr. Gilbert," said Nick.

"Why, sir, he was a man of medium build and about forty years old. He was quite dark, but with a rather pallid skin and——"

"That is sufficient," Nick interrupted. "Tell Mr. Waldmere that he may send you and McLauren after the seventeen cases remaining in the car. I will look after getting —the other three."

"Do you mean, Mr. Carter, that——"

"Never mind what I mean," Nick again cut in. "Say nothing about the questions I have asked. Do only what I have directed."

"I will, sir."

Gilbert bowed and withdrew. He looked as if something unthought of before had suddenly dawned upon him.

"By Jove, we seem to be getting down to cases," Chick remarked, when the chauffeur had closed the door.

"We are," Nick tersely agreed.

"You think the man who showed up just in time to direct loading the freight car——"

"Is the man we want, or one of them," put in Nick.

"There is no doubt of that. He got by both Gilbert and the train hand by assuming an air of authority that completely deceived both. One supposed him a road employee; the other the owner, perhaps, of the twenty cases."

"Most likely."

"Be that as it may, he got the three cases containing the gold plate placed so near the car door that they could be quickly removed after arriving in New York. He further fooled Gilbert, moreover, into letting him forge a copy of the bil of lading, probably on a blank already obtained."

"Sure thing," Chick nodded. "That's as plain as twice two."

"He was on Gilbert's trail from the time he left New York."

"If we could discover his identity——"

"Leave that to me," Nick interrupted. "Call in Patsy, also Waldmere, and his wife. Stay—wait one moment!"

Nick arose abruptly and approached a large roll-top desk near one of the walls. The cover of it was raised. Taking a lens from his pocket, Nick examined the polished woodwork on all sides, including the faces of several small interior drawers, surveying all of them at an angle that caught the light in a way that served his purpose.

"Now, Chick, I'm ready," he remarked, resuming his seat.

Patsy Garvan entered a few moments later, followed immediately by Waldmere and his wife. Both gazed inquiringly at the detective, anxious to know what he had learned, but Nick did not inform them. Instead, addressing Waldmere, he said, with seeming indifference:

"I will have finished in a short time. I think you said, Waldmere, that the inventory of the twenty cases, which was mailed to you from London, was received about two weeks ago."

"Yes. Just about that," Waldmere nodded.

"Where is it?"

"In my desk."

"Has it been there most of the time?"

"Yes. It is in one of the small drawers."

"I inferred so," Nick said, a bit dryly. "May I see it?"

"Certainly."

Before the Englishman could open the small interior drawer toward which he reached, however, Nick checked him by saying abruptly, as if suddenly hit with another idea:

"Stay! I don't think I really care to see it. Instead, Waldmere, I would like to question your butler and the two maids."

"Very well."

"Which of them, Mrs. Waldmere, has charge of this room?" Nick added, turning to her. "I refer to the sweeping and dusting."

"Minerva Grand," she replied.

"The general housemaid?"

"Yes. She is a very sweet and dainty girl."

"Call in both maids and the butler," said Nick, turning to Waldmere again. "I will question each of them. Do not interfere with me, nor volunteer any suggestion if I give either of them an order."

Waldmere looked very much puzzled, but he bowed without replying, and rang for the butler.

Patterson came in with the two maids a little later. He was stiff and sedate, the type of man who could not commit a crime if he tried. He presented a marked contrast to the two girls, both of whom were pretty and only just turned twenty.

Della Martin, the elder, was a dark, capable-looking girl, who responded with manifest confidence to the detective's questions, evincing no sign of fear.

The other, Minerva Grand, was the more attractive. She was slender and dainty, with a face like that of a doll. Her complexion was a clear pink and white, her eyes wonderfully blue, her mouth well formed and sensitive. An abundance of wavy yellow hair appeared like a halo over her winsome countenance. A more artless and innocent-looking girl could not be imagined, and her deportment was in keeping with her looks.

Nick Carter questioned all three, but his inquiries were really only a blind, to dispel misgivings on the part of either of them, and neither Chick nor Patsy could fathom at what he was driving.

After several minutes, however, Nick turned to Minerva Grand and said pleasantly:

"I wish you would bring me a cup of hot water with a spoon in it. Have it quite hot."

"Yes, sir, I will," she replied, bowing demurely.

"I want to dissolve an alkali to make a chemical test."

"Yes, sir, please you," said Minerva, hastening to obey.

"You may go, Patterson, and you," Nick added, addressing the others. "If you are wanted again, I will ring."

Both withdrew, and Waldmere was about to ask a question. He caught a forbidding gleam in the detective's eyes, however, and he said nothing.

Nick fished out part of a lozenge from his pocket, a bit of confectionery that he happened to have. He held it in the palm of his hand when Minerva returned with a cup of steaming water, containing a silver spoon.

"Hold the spoon a moment, my girl," said Nick, taking the cup from her.

Minerva removed it without speaking.

Nick dropped the piece of lozenge into the water, then glanced up at her pretty face.

"Now the spoon, if you please," said he, taking it from her. "That is all, thank you. You may go."

Minerva bowed, blushing, and left the room.

Chick, Patsy, and the Waldmeres were still more puzzled.

Nick arose and walked to the window. Unobserved by the others, he took his lens from his pocket and briefly studied—the finger print left by the girl on the steam-dampened handle of the silver spoon.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT NICK HAD LEARNED.

It was after one o'clock when Nick Carter left the Waldmere residence, after having given such further instructions as the circumstances seemed to require.

Twenty minutes later found him seated in his business office with Chick and Patsy, when he at once began to tell them what he thought of the case.

"There is little to it, and also much to it," said he enigmatically. "We must do some quick work, mighty quick work, or farewell to the Waldmere plate."

"How do you size it up, chief?" questioned Patsy, who

saw that Nick was somewhat anxious over the outcome of the case.

"That may be told in a nutshell," Nick replied. "Waldmere's designs were known by his servants. One of them put a gang of crooks wise to the possibility of this robbery and what could be derived from it."

"Surely," put in Chick. "That's as plain as twice two, though Waldmere does not think so."

"The information was stealthily learned from the inventory received two weeks ago," Nick continued. "A copy of it was secretly made, no doubt, and given to one of the crooks."

"Ten to one," Chick nodded.

That gave them the numbers of the three cases containing the gold plate, and they afterward were kept constantly informed as to the time of their arrival and of what Waldmere's intentions consisted."

"That's obvious, also."

"Just how she was led into this crime, however, and with whom she has been communicating and handing out this information, remain to be discovered. It must be discovered, too, without delay."

"She!" exclaimed Patsy, gazing. "Do you suspect one of the maids, chief?"

"More than suspect, Patsy," Nick replied. "I am sure of her."

"Which one, chief?"

"Minerva Grand."

"Gee whiz! That doll-faced girl! She don't look capable of stealing a feather from a peacock's tail."

"That's too true for a joke, Patsy," said Chick, a bit dryly. "Are you really sure of it, Nick?"

"Dead sure, Chick, and then some."

"By Jove, it seems almost incredible."

"Let me explain," said Nick. "I found on the highly polished face of one of the small interior drawers in Waldmere's desk numerous dainty finger prints."

"H'm, is that so?"

"I might not have been so quick to suspect, however, if I had found the same on the adjoining small drawers, also. But they were only on one. It was the one to which Waldmere reached when I asked him to let me see the inventory. I already felt sure it was in that drawer."

"Ah, that explains it," said Chick, smiling. "I wondered at what you were driving."

"Gee! I was in on that, all right," put in Patsy. "I couldn't fathom it."

"I suspected that they were the finger prints of the girl who sweeps and dusts the room," Nick continued. "That would have given her an opportunity, or many of them, in fact, to stealthily examine the inventory, and even make a copy of it."

"Surely," Chick nodded.

"I decided, however, that I had better clinch my suspicion. I found the same dainty finger print on the damp silver spoon which I had her bring and hold for a moment."

"Gosh, that did settle it!" said Patsy. "Clever work, chief, all right."

"I am convinced of the guilt of this girl and the part she has played in the robbery."

"Why didn't you arrest her, then, and force a confession from her?" Chick inquired.

"That last might not be easily done," Nick replied. "Furthermore, the girl may not know the crooks."

"Not know them? How can that be, providing your suspicions are correct?"

"She may have been lured into this by a supposed friend, one who is in league with the crooks and who is acting as a sort of go-between."

"I see the point," bowed Chick. "Minerva Grand might not be able to put us on the track of the gang itself."

"That's the point precisely," said Nick. "I would not take the chance of arresting her, therefore, or even of letting her know that I suspect her. That is why I did not make a special mark of her in my inquiries, also why I have kept all this from the Waldmeres and left them entirely in the dark. I feared they might betray me to the girl by some word, or look."

"I see."

"Now, to go a step further, the man who held up McLauren was one of the gang," Nick continued. "He was, in reality, the chief of the gang. He is the same man who followed Frank Gilbert to Boston, and who so artfully had the three cases put near the door of the freight car, and afterward succeeded in getting a forged copy of the bill of lading. He is a keen and clever rascal. He is all the mustard in the pot, that fellow."

"You speak as if you already know him," said Chick, gazing.

"I do know him, Chick."

"The dickens! Whom do you suspect?"

"A man who stopped me in Madison Avenue a few days ago," Nick declared, with more feeling. "It was the first time I have seen him for a couple of years. He cursed me for having put him to the bad, and he threatened me with something no less strange than—the melting pot."

"The melting pot?" Chick echoed perplexedly. "What did he mean?"

"That's right, too. What?" questioned Patsy.

Nick Carter laughed a bit grimly.

"I did not know what he meant at the time, nor seriously care," he replied, after a moment. "I now know, however, what he meant by the melting pot. He threatened to put something over on me and send me all to the bad. It now is plain enough to me that he had this robbery in mind, and the job well in hand."

"You mean?"

"It's the melting pot, not for me, Chick, in reality, but for this priceless Waldmere plate—unless we can move quickly enough to prevent it."

"By, gracious, chief, that must be what he meant!" cried Patsy, with countenance lighting.

"But who is the man, Nick?" Chick demanded. "You have said nothing to me about meeting him."

"I thought it hardly worth while," Nick replied. "The threats of such rascals have no weight with me. The man was Stuart Floyd."

"Great guns!" said Chick. "Is he in New York again?"

"Very much here."

"Were you aware of it before?"

"No."

"He must have been lying mighty low. I have not heard so much as a hint at it."

"All the same, Chick, he is the man behind the gun in this job," Nick said confidently. "He has got back

at Waldmere for that other affair in which he was put on the rocks."

"By Jove, the case seems to be shaping up."

"It is shaping up to that extent," Nick went on. "But Floyd is much too keen and cautious to have figured openly in this robbery with such a girl as Minerva Grand. There is a go-between, either a girl friend, or a lover. That's who we must find and get after."

"By Jove, I guess you are right," Chick said, more gravely.

"Sure thing!" put in Patsy.

"We will take that chance," Nick replied. "It is nearly a safe gamble, too, that Floyd, after holding up McLauren as a pretended detective, waited only for Bug Bannon to show up before he would release the truckman."

"That's how I sized it up," Chick agreed.

"You think Bannon is in the job, chief?" questioned Patsy, who had lost part of what had been said in Waldmere's library.

"I do, Patsy."

"In what way?"

"He probably was watching in the railway yard when the three cases were taken away by others of the gang," Nick explained. "Bannon then flew up to Forty-eighth Street to covertly notify Floyd that the two men had got safely away with their plunder."

"Gee! that seems reasonable."

"Floyd then released McLauren," added the detective. "I suspected all this when McLauren was telling his story."

"We'd better get after Bannon, then," Chick suggested. "Both Bannon and Minerva Grand," said Nick. "Both must be shadowed."

"That's the stuff, chief."

"This is the girl's afternoon and evening out, and she may have an appointment with the suspected go-between. The gang will have learned that we are on the case, of course, and may look to Minerva Grand to find out what we make of it."

"They'll get fat, chief, on what she can tell them," laughed Patsy.

"You had better follow up the girl, Chick, and be governed by circumstances."

"That will suit me, Nick, all right," Chick said agreeably.

"Not having communicated openly with Floyd, and I having said nothing about this at the Waldmere residence, Bannon naturally will not fear that he is suspected," Nick added. "Do you know him by sight, Patsy?"

"Well, rather!" Patsy exclaimed expressively. "I know the face of every rat of his kind from Harlem to the Battery."

"Get out in disguise, then, and see what you can accomplish," Nick abruptly directed. "I will begin a still-hunt for Floyd himself, in the meantime, also for the two men who got away with the cases. This work must be done in record time, mind you, or it will be all off with the Waldmere plate."

"Record time goes!" cried Patsy, hastening to make ready.

"By this time to-morrow, perhaps, unless we can prevent it, the melting pot will have turned the priceless plate into ingots, precluding identification, and which could be sold for good, hard cash," Nick declared, rising. "It's up to us to head off that deviltry and round up these crooks."

CHAPTER V.

ANGEL FACE.

Chick Carter was the first of the three detectives to leave home on the work assigned him. Carefully disguised, Chick boarded a subway train and arrived shortly before three o'clock in the neighborhood of the Waldmere residence.

Nick had made it a point to learn before leaving that morning that none of the servants were in the habit of going out before three on the afternoon and evening allowed them.

Chick easily found a concealment from which he could watch both the side and rear door of the house, from one of which he knew that Minerva Grand would depart, if she availed herself of the privilege afforded. Though inclined to agree with Nick, in that the latter's suspicions were correct, it seemed almost incredible to Chick that a girl of Minerva's appearance and bearing could willingly have a hand in any kind of crime.

"She's the most innocent-looking wisp of a girl I ever did see," he said to himself while surveying the doors and windows of the stately residence. "She may have been lured into the job, or forced into it by some means. It would be very like Stuart Floyd to take advantage of her artlessness, knowing that she would be about the last to invite suspicion. This afternoon and evening ought to settle it, at all events."

There was no sign of Minerva Grand, however, at any of the windows. The house appeared to have relapsed into its customary state of dignity and repose. Nor in any direction, moreover, could Chick discover any other person watching it, and he rightly inferred that the crooks felt tolerably sure that the truth was not even suspected.

His vigil proved to be longer than he anticipated. The minutes lengthened into hours. Six o'clock came, but no sign of the suspected girl, though Mrs. Waldmere's maid had left the house soon after four.

"It may be, by Jove, that she left before I arrived here," thought Chick, a bit impatient. "I'd better find out positively. I might telephone to Mrs. Waldmere from the next house, or—ah, there comes a light on the top floor. It may be in the girl's room."

The sun had set and dusk was deepening to darkness. The light that had caught Chick's eye caused him to linger and watch. A moment later he saw Minerva draw down the curtain, and he knew he had not waited vainly.

"She may have been waiting for evening," he said to himself. "She would know, at least, that there is less risk than in daylight. Or she may have an appointment for the evening, as Nick suspects."

Chick then had not long to wait.

The light in the upper room suddenly vanished. Presently the side door of the house was opened, and in the stream of light from the hall the dainty figure of the girl appeared for a moment, only to be lost briefly in the gloom of the vestibule after she closed the door.

Chick then saw her trip lightly down the steps and out

to the street, clad in a trim jacket and a hat that only partly hid her abundance of yellow hair.

After turning the first corner, however, stealthily followed by the detective, Minerva stopped short and took a voluminous veil from her pocket, which she carefully tied over her hat and hair, then drew it down until it completely hid her girlish face.

"That does settle it," thought Chick, constantly watching her. "She's off on some evil mission. Nick sized her up correctly, all right. She evidently has no fear of being followed, which will make it all the easier for me. By Jove, this seems like chasing a fairy. She can't weigh more than ninety pounds."

Minerva had started off again, with the detective after her.

Ten minutes brought her to a subway station, where she took a downtown train.

Alighting at Forty-second Street, she walked briskly away and soon brought up opposite a restaurant and concert hall having a somewhat unenviable reputation. There she paused in a doorway to gaze over at the lighted windows.

"She's looking for some one, or waiting for some one to show up," thought Chick, after briefly watching her. "I may get a line on the party before her, by Jove, in case he already has arrived. She cannot see from over there."

Minerva still was lingering in the doorway.

Leaving the corner on which he had paused to watch her, Chick sauntered into the place and bought a drink at the bar.

Beyond the barroom, through a broad entrance adorned with potted palms, was a large concert hall filled with numerous tables and with curtained booths flanking the side walls.

Patrons of the place were seated at many of the tables, eating, drinking, and smoking. A score of waiters were hurrying to and fro. In the rear of the hall an orchestra was playing popular airs. The noise and stir were incessant.

Gazing into the broad mirror back of the bar, Chick suddenly made a discovery—a woman seated alone in one of the nearest booths.

The curtains were partly drawn, and Chick would not have discovered her save for the angle afforded by the mirror.

"By gracious! there's the connecting link," he said to himself. "This does settle it. Vera Vantoon, eh? That jade who figured with Stuart Floyd in the looting of the loan company. She was hand and glove with Floyd at that time, and it's long odds that their intimacy has not ended. This is the person for whom Minerva Grand is looking. She's the connecting link, all right. By Jove, I must contrive to overhear what passes between them."

Chick was quick to take advantage of the girl's delay in entering the place, which he rightly inferred was due to diffidence and inexperience.

Stepping back of the palms near the entrance to the concert hall, Chick beckoned to one of the waiters then at the bar. He was a slender chap in a starched cap and a long white apron, who appeared bright enough to grasp a situation without having it hammered into him.

"I am a detective, one of Nick Carter's staff," Chick quietly informed him. "There is a woman in the third booth on this side of the hall. Have you noticed her?"

"Yes, sir," nodded the waiter. "I serve at the tables nearest that booth."

"Do you know her?"

"Only by sight. She comes in here quite often."

"Can you get me a cap and apron like yours?"

"Yes, by asking the manager."

"Where is he?"

"The tall man near the end of the bar."

"What is his name?"

"Scoville."

"Call him over here."

The waiter obeyed, returning with the manager, to whom Chick quickly explained the situation and stated what he wanted. The mere mention of Nick Carter's name was sufficient to insure Scoville's coöperation.

"Why, sure thing," he said, after listening. "I would only bite off my own nose by refusing. Slip around the end of the bar, Mr. Carter, and into my private room. I'll fit you out in half a minute and be glad to accommodate you in this matter."

Chick did as directed, gliding around into the manager's office, unseen by any in the concert hall.

Half a minute later, wearing a cap and apron, he emerged and, mingled with the waiters, selecting that side of the room on which was the booth in which Vera Vantoon was seated.

The entire episode had transpired in less than five minutes, yet Chick had hardly arrived near the booth mentioned, when he saw Minerva Grand entering the concert hall with her veil partly raised.

At the same moment, too, he saw Vera Vantoon thrust her hand between the curtains of the booth and beckon to the approaching girl.

Minerva passed him without so much as a glance and hurriedly entered the booth.

Chick edged nearer to it, remaining as stiff and staid as a wooden Indian within three feet of the drawn curtains, there then being no persons at the near tables for him to serve.

Chick was near enough to hear the first words that came through the curtains of the booth, and most of what followed when the voice of the two women were lowered.

"Hello, Angel Face!" Vera Vantoon exclaimed, clasping both hands of the girl. "Heavens, but you were a long time getting here."

"Getting here!" echoed Minerva, evidently in nervous excitement. "The getting here cuts no ice. I could have got here long ago. It's where I'm likely to get after leaving here. That's what troubles me. I didn't think you would serve me such a trick, Vera. On my word, I didn't."

Vera Vantoon laughed a bit coarsely in cold and mirthless fashion.

"So you are wise to it, now, are you?" she replied.

"How can I help being wise to it? I'll never forgive you, Vera, never!"

"Don't be foolish, Angel Face," returned the woman, still clasping the girl's hands. "I've done you the favor of your life. Think what you're to gain."

"A prison cell, mebbe."

"Rats! Nothing of that kind, Angel Face, take my word for it."

"Your word ain't much good. You didn't tell me the truth."

"About what?"

"Why you wanted that list of boxes, and why I was to keep you posted as to what the master and mistress were doing. I know all about it now. You were planning to rob them."

"H'm, just so," thought Chick, listening intently. "It's as Nick suspected. This simpleton has been lured blindly into the crime by a designing woman. It was child's play for Vera Vantoon."

The woman laughed again and slipped her arm around the girl's waist.

"What of it?" she replied, with voice lowered. "Don't be frightened at that. Think what you're to gain by it. Do you want to be a servant and slave the whole of your life? This little job will put you in right as long as you live."

"But I'm scared out of my wits, Vera."

"Nonsense!"

"I'm afraid we'll be caught."

"Rats! How are you to be caught? Who would suspect you, Angel Face? Only a clairvoyant would ever guess that you had a hand in it."

"I'm not so sure."

"Tell me all about it," said Vera, who evidently had a powerful influence over the girl. "That's why I wanted you to meet me here to-night. Tell me the whole business, all that took place to-day in the house. I'll see that nothing happens to you, Angel Face."

"You'll have all you can do, you jade, to look out for yourself," thought Chick, a bit grimly.

Yielding to the woman's persuasive tongue, Minerva then proceeded to state all that had transpired that morning in the Waldmere residence, in so far as she knew and had been able to determine what it signified.

Vera Vantoon listened with knit brows and drawn lips, slipping in a question now and then, but for the most part quietly absorbing all that the misguided girl imparted.

"Humph!" she grunted contemptuously, after the girl had finished. "So Nick Carter is on the case, is he?"

"That is the name of the man who questioned me," nodded Minerva.

"Well, we expected it," sneered Vera. "He'll get fat on this case."

"I'm afraid of him, Vera."

"You needn't be," said the woman. "He'll never question you again. We'll look out for that. You'll never see him again, Angel Face, take my word for it."

"That sounds as if a job had been put up on Nick," Chick said to himself. "If they get by with it, now that I've got this she-devil under my eyes, they will go some, all right."

It had become obvious to Chick that the girl had been a tool in the hands of this woman, and that he would learn nothing more by playing the eavesdropper then and there, Vera Vantoon confiding nothing to her companion, who evidently was entirely ignorant of the identity of the latter's confederates.

"They will separate after leaving here," he said to himself. "The girl will probably go straight home. There would be nothing for me in remaining on her track. I'll drop her and get after the woman."

Gliding noiselessly away from the position he had occupied, Chick returned to the manager's office and resumed his discarded garments.

He then sauntered out to the bar again, from which he continued to watch the booth, lest his own doings might have been observed by some spy in league with the woman, who then would be warned of her danger.

A furtive scrutiny for a few minutes convinced Chick, however, that Vera Vantoon had come alone to keep the appointment, and he then returned to the street to await her departure.

Five minutes later both women came out and proceeded together as far as the nearest corner, where they conversed briefly before separating.

Minerva Grand drew down her veil and hurried away in the direction of a subway station.

"Bound home," thought Chick. "Now for the woman."

Vera Vantoon did not take a conveyance.

Glancing sharply around, she drew her cloak about her and walked rapidly away, heading for Second Avenue and then toward one of the lowest sections of the East Side.

Ten minutes brought her into a narrow street, in one of the worst and most congested precincts of the city, in so far as the buildings were concerned.

They were old and of the lowest type, crowded in nondescript fashion into the foul territory they occupied, with a labyrinth of black alleys running hither and thither among them, and forming a maze through which crooks familiar with the surroundings could easily elude a pursuer, even though nearly as well acquainted with the miserable quarters.

"By Jove, she's heading for the lair of her confederates," thought Chick, after stealthily following her into the narrow street. "It may not be dead easy to trail her."

This became doubly apparent in a very few moments. There were but few persons in the dismal street, which made it more difficult for Chick to closely follow her.

Her dark figure, too, could be seen only at intervals, when she passed one of the blurs of light that relieved only feebly the prevailing gloom.

Suddenly, nevertheless, Chick saw her turn aside—and then he lost sight of her.

He waited with strained eyes for half a minute, but could not discover her.

"By Jove, I mustn't let her give me the slip," he muttered. "Better arrest her than stand for that."

He darted on with the last, quickly reaching the spot where he last had seen her.

The woman had vanished as if the earth had swallowed her.

Chick gazed sharply around and discovered the black entrance of an alley between two gloomy buildings.

"Hang it, she could not have gone in there," he said to himself, irritated by the threatening mishap. "She did not go as far as that, as well as I could tell. It may be all off, by thunder, unless I can trace her. I wish, now, that I had arrested both her and that yellow-haired girl. It now looks bad, for fair."

Chick was looking in vain all the while for the vanished woman.

It did not appear that she could have entered either of the buildings near which he last had seen her. Both were shrouded in darkness.

The only refuge to which she could have resorted ap-

peared to be the alley mentioned, and Chick felt reasonably sure that she had not gone as far as that.

He now turned in that direction, nevertheless, and crept into the gloomy hole. It was so dark he scarce could see his hand before his face. He reached into his pocket to get his searchlight.

As he did so, he stumbled against something lying on the ground.

He stooped and felt of it with his hand, suppressing a cry of surprise.

He had stumbled against—the body of a man!

CHAPTER VI.

DOWN AND OUT.

Patsy Garvan, while Chick was engaged as described, was working out another string of the bow by which Nick Carter was hoping not only to save the Waldmere plate from the melting pot, but also to round up the crooks who had stolen it.

Patsy's first move was to perfect a disguise that would have caused his own wife not only to turn him down, but even to have fired him out of the house, if he had dared venture into it.

No more tough and sinister-looking a chap ever stood in leather, than was Patsy Garvan when he appeared in a lower section of the Bowery about four o'clock that afternoon.

Patsy was not looking for Bug Bannon at that time. Though he knew the notorious young gangster by sight, and many of the haunts in which he might possibly be found, Patsy was bent upon working out a scheme of his own by which to accomplish his chief's object.

The nature of it appeared soon after he entered an inferior saloon in one of the side streets, a haunt of the disreputable, and where he finally found the person he had been seeking.

This was an infamous character by the name of John Flynn, though he was much better known to his select circle of friends, and to the police, as Pilot Flynn. He had obtained this sobriquet from the fact that his chief vocation, if not his only one, was that of a steerer for sin's games and other gambling joints, or, in other words, a pilot for such strangers as could be artfully lured to their own undoing.

Patsy had had a case against this fellow a month before, one that would have sent him to Sing Sing. He had not pressed it, nor even arrested him, however, because of the fact that Flynn associated at times with two other crooks much wanted by Patsy and the police, and through whom he hoped to discover them.

It was about half past four when Patsy entered the saloon mentioned, and he discovered Flynn eating free lunch from a table in the rear of the long room. There were many others in the dive, and the entrance of Patsy was hardly noticed. He threaded his way through the smoke-filled place and brought up at Flynn's elbow.

"How are you, Pilot?" he said quietly.

Flynn swung round and viewed him sharply through a pair of sinister, beady black eyes.

"What's eating you?" he snarled under his breath, suspiciously.

"Don't know me, eh?' queried Patsy.

"Not so you'd notice it."

"Well, don't show any surprise when I tell you," cautioned Patsy. "I've been looking for you. I'm—whisper! Patsy Garvan."

Flynn's hangdog face lost some of its color. He drew back, muttering an oath, then quickly added:

"Looking for me? You're not——"

"No, I'm not going to take you in," put in Patsy. "Nothing of that kind."

"What d'ye want, then?" Flynn asked, with a look of relief.

"I want you to do something for me."

"What's that?"

Come into the back room and I'll order some booze," said Patsy. "There's no one in there. I'll tell you while we fire a ball or two."

This proposition suited Flynn to the letter, particularly since learning that he was not to be arrested, but rather was in a fair way to acquire further consideration on the part of the detective.

"I'm with you," he nodded. "That's good enough for me."

Patsy led the way into a dingy rear room and rang for one of the bartenders. He appeared in a moment and took the order, presently returning with the drinks. Patsy paid him, and then closed the door, drawing a chair to the bare table, at which Flynn had seated himself.

"Now, Pilot, we'll get down to business," he said quietly, with an assurance the other did not quite fancy. "When did you last see Bug Bannon?"

"I dunno," said Flynn, crafty-eyed. "It must be a week, sure, since I had me lamps on him."

"You're pretty good friends, aren't you?"

"For all I know."

"You know you are," said Patsy, a bit sharply. "Come across with straight goods, now, or you'll get all that's coming to you. Are you on?"

"Sure."

"One word from me will send you up the river."

"I know that, Garvan," Flynn grimly admitted. "What is it you want?"

"I want to find Bug Bannon between now and dark. Do you know where to look for him?"

"I might find him for you. What's up?"

"I'm after a bunch that pulled off a robbery this morning."

"How does Bannon fit in?"

"He's in touch with them, and I want to nail them through him."

"Rats! He wouldn't tell you," said Flynn. "He's no snitch. He wouldn't squeal if he was in the chair."

"That may be true, perhaps, but with your help I can get the information I want, and very probably the crooks I am after," said Patsy. "In other words, Pilot, I want you to put me in right with Bannon."

"What's that 'in-right' gag?" questioned Flynn distrustfully. "What d'ye mean by that?"

Patsy made no bones over explaining.

"I want you to go with me and find Bannon," he said curtly. "When we have found him, you must introduce me to him as a particular pal of yours, Sandy Glynn by name, and tell him that you knew me in Chicago. Tell him that you owe me a special service, in return for something done for you, and——"

"Say! D'ye think I——"

"Never mind what I think, Pilot," Patsy interrupted.

"You're going to do what I direct, and do it right up to snuff, or it's you for the stone house with the barred windows. Do you get me?"

"Sure I get you," growled Flynn, scowling darkly. "What more d'ye want?"

"You must tell Bannon that I am wanted by the Chicago police, that detectives are here after me for a burglary, and that you want him to find a safe concealment for me, where I can lie low till the dicks have gone. You must ask it as a special favor, making it plain that he is the only one to whom you can turn to help you out. Hand it to him good and strong, Pilot, for your liberty depends upon your making good. That's what I want of you—and all I want. I'll do the rest."

Flynn's face wore a look as black as midnight. He sat silent for a moment, scowling daggers at the detective, and then he snarled bitterly between his teeth:

"Say! I'll not do this."

"Oh, yes, you will," Patsy quietly insisted.

"You're making a snitch of me, a dirty cur, a traitor to——"

"Enough of that, Pilot," Patsy interrupted. "You're going to do it, and do it up right—or you're going with me! You know what that means."

"But Bug Bannon will knife me for it."

"No, he won't. When I get through with him, he'll be where he cannot do any knifing."

"But——"

"Besides," Patsy again cut in, "he need never know but what you thought you were acting on the level."

"How can that be?"

"You can claim that you did know a crook named Sandy Glynn, and with whom you were friendly in Chicago. You can insist that I was made up as a marker for him, and that you did not dream that I was a detective. You can get by all right with that story, even if you and Bannon do come together again. He would swallow it, hands down, coming from you."

"That's the worst of it, blast you!" Flynn snarled fiercely. "That's why I can't do it."

"You've got to do it, Pilot. You'll do it, or do time."

"That goes, does it?" questioned Flynn, hesitating.

"You bet it goes!"

"Suppose I make good, all right. Will you promise never to give me away?"

"Certainly."

"On the dead?"

"You know me," said Patsy. "My word is as good as a government bond."

"Mebbe 'tis, but I wish you were at the bottom of the East River," Flynn growled harshly. "But I'll do it, hang you! I'll do it to save my own skin."

"With no monkey business, mind you," cautioned Patsy. "That will be all your life is worth."

"I'll hand it to him right."

"Do you know where to find him?"

"I can round him up between now and dark. That's what you said."

"Come on, then," said Patsy, rising. "Let's lose no time about it."

Despite Flynn's assurance, however, nearly three hours were spent in a vain search before he finally found the gangster.

Eight o'clock that evening saw all three seated around a small table in a saloon in Second Avenue, on which several rounds of drinks already had been served.

Flynn had told his story and had put it fully as strong as Patsy Garvan had directed.

It appeared to have made a favorable impression upon Bannon, as also had the disguised detective, who had played his part to the letter.

"I know a place, all right, and a gang you'd fit in well with," Bannon finally said, in response to a suggestion from Patsy that he ought to get under cover without delay. "There's a guy among 'em you'd like to meet. He's the big finger of the bunch."

Patsy felt sure that he referred to Stuart Floyd.

"That will suit me, Bug, and then some," he assured the grinning rascal. "You will always find me ready to hold my end up."

"That sounds good to me, Glynn, and the Pilot's not likely to put me in wrong in any way."

"I'll be off, then, if you two ginks are going," said Flynn, when Bannon appeared willing to depart and take Patsy along with him. "I'll see you again to-morrow."

"Out the front way, Pilot," Bannon replied, glancing toward the swinging doors. "It's the back way and the alley for us."

"So long, then!"

Flynn arose with the last and hurried out of the place. He was glad to get away. Though himself a crook and a steerer, the despicable part that he had played was far from his liking.

"We'll be off, too, Sandy, if you're ready," Bannon then said quietly.

"The sooner the better," Patsy nodded.

"Half a minute while I make sure the coast is clear."

Patsy waited, well pleased with the result of his subterfuge, and the outlook that now appeared to insure his complete success. He was not deterred for a moment by the thought that he was carrying his life in his hand.

Bannon sauntered into a back room, evidently being perfectly familiar with the place and its surroundings. He returned to the door a moment later and beckoned Patsy to follow him.

"I've got him down pat, all right," flashed through Patsy's mind while he complied. "He don't so much as even scent a rat in the meal. If I can only get next to Floyd and the rest of the gang—well, I can see their finish."

Bannon conducted him out of a back door and around two old buildings in the rear, which brought them into one of the crosstown streets. He then headed for another section of the East Side—that to which Chick Carter shadowed Vera Vantoon only a short time later.

All the while Patsy kept up a quiet stream of talk, describing the supposed burglary for which he was wanted, and in a way to further impress Bannon, but never an inquisitive word to awaken a feeling of distrust.

Nevertheless, the unexpected happened, in so far as Patsy was concerned.

Ten minutes brought them to the street in which Chick lost sight of his quarry.

"Keep your trap closed, now," cautioned Bannon, as they were nearing the alley previously mentioned. "I've got to give a signal in half a minute."

"I'm dumb," nodded Patsy, detecting no sign of treachery in the other's eyes.

Bannon halted upon arriving at the entrance to the alley. He glanced up and down the street, noting that it was deserted, and then he said softly:

"Wait here and watch out in that direction. We'll sneak through the alley in half a minute and——"

Patsy heard no more.

Involuntarily, as it were, he had turned his head to look in the direction indicated by his companion.

Bannon's hand then leaped from his side pocket. It was gripping the barrel of a revolver. It rose and fell like a flash, the butt of the weapon landing with a sickening thud squarely on Patsy' head.

He went down and out and into dreamland as quickly and completely as if felled with an ax.

CHAPTER VII.

INTO A TRAP.

To one not versed in the detective's art, the announcement of Nick Carter that he was going on a still-hunt after Stuart Floyd would have sounded like a vain and vaunting assertion.

To hunt up one man among the million in New York, a man presumably aware of the fact that he was wanted by the police, and therefore having a potent incentive to keeping out of sight—to attempt to hunt up such a man would seem to a novice a vain and hopeless undertaking.

None knew better than Nick Carter, however, the underworld and the ways of its crooks.

Nick did not seek Floyd in any of the haunts to which such criminals sometimes resort. He knew there would be nothing in that.

He reasoned, however, that Floyd would leave no stone unturned to find out what investigations were being made and what was known and suspected about the robbery, and Nick was much too keen to overlook the probability that the desired information might be covertly sought in the railway yard, when Frank Gilbert and McLauren returned to the freight car to remove the remaining cases.

This required two trips by the couple, it being impossible to take them away in a single load, and it was during their second visit to the car that Nick put in an appearance—or, rather, did not put in an appearance.

For, without displaying any interest in the labors of the two men, or in the contents of the car, Nick picked his way between several trains that were sidetracked in that part of the yard, apparently seeking some other car in which he had an interest. He was carefully disguised and felt sure that he was safe from ordinary recognition.

Nick had not long been thus engaged before he made a convincing discovery. Peering under the long rows of freight cars, he saw beyond that in which Gilbert and McLauren were working—the legs of a man.

One fact alone convinced Nick that his immediate suspicions were correct. The legs were motionless. The man was stationary.

"The rascal is listening on the other side of the car from which the two men are taking out the cases," Nick said to himself, after briefly watching what little he could see of the motionless figure. "The opposite door must be closed and his presence is not suspected. He hopes to hear Gilbert and the truckman discussing what occurred in the Waldmere residence this morning, and what I said about the robbery. Otherwise, he would not be standing there like a lay figure in a shop window. I'll have a closer look at him for a starter."

Passing around the trains under which he had been gazing, Nick speedily reached a position from which he could view the suspect.

He was not the type of man the detective had expected to see. He was roughly clad and looked like a ragpicker. He had a short iron hook in one hand and carried a partly filled burlap bag under his arm.

His hair and beard were gray and long, his figure bowed, and he appeared to be fully seventy years old.

This questionable character, who had been standing just where the detective had thought, looked up and saw Nick just as he appeared beyond the end of the sidetracked train.

He betrayed no fear, however, no inclination to run away. Instead, he walked straight toward the detective, glancing under the cars and over the ground, as if in search of bits of iron and junk, or anything else with which he could turn a penny.

He passed directly by Nick, with merely an indifferent glance at him, as he might have bestowed upon any of the yard hands, and then he ambled on with unsteady gait and sought the near street.

Nick passed quickly around a string of cars and followed him.

"Floyd himself, by Jove, or I am much mistaken," he said to himself. "The make-up is a good one, but I don't think I can be mistaken in those shifty gray eyes. Now to prevent his eluding me, if he even suspects my identity."

There seemed to be no probability of the last. Without looking back, walking as slowly and feebly as if really bowed with years, pausing at intervals to peer into a rubbish barrel he was passing, or to prod into it with his iron hook—thus the man proceeded toward the East Side, with the detective cautiously following.

Nick knew the district tolerably well at which his quarry finally brought up, knew it to be one of the worst in the city. He was somewhat surprised that Floyd, if he had not mistaken his identity, was seeking such a locality, for he had been in the past a man of good taste and fastidious habits.

Nevertheless, constantly watching him, Nick saw the man turn suddenly from the street and disappear between two old storage buildings.

Nick was not in a mood to be given the slip, nor to stand upon ceremony if threatened with anything of that kind.

He had deferred arresting the man only with a view to trailing him until he could discover his confederates, as well as the hiding place of the stolen plate.

Walking more rapidly, therefore, Nick quickly arrived at the alley into which his quarry had disappeared.

Still, he could not discover him. The alley ran through to a more open area, in which there were several old sheds and hovels. Beyond them was a small, square stone building of only two low stories and having a flat roof. Its few narrow windows were protected with iron shutters, all of which were closed and secured. The general appearance of the building denoted that it once had been used for storing explosives of some kind before municipal regulations prohibited it.

It then appeared to be unoccupied and out of use, however, and directly beyond it loomed the blank, windowless brick wall of a brewery fronting on the next street.

Nick lost no time in picking his way through the narrow alley. Even then, he could not at first discover his man. Passing quickly around two of the sheds mentioned, however, he then saw him in a small wooden building near the stone structure described.

The door of it was wide open, and the man was seated on a low stool within, engaged in pulling a quantity of rags from his burlap bag and tossing them upon a rag heap in one corner.

For the first time, in view of all this, Nick began to fear that he had mistaken the man's identity. This seemed even more probable in that he did not appear disturbed by the approach of the detective, merely looking up with a questioning stare when he paused at the open door.

"How's the rag business, old man?" Nick inquired, a bit bluntly.

"Bad—vair bad!" was the reply, with a cracked and cackling voice.

"Little doing, eh?"

"Vair liddle. Nodding at all."

"Is this where you store your stuff?" questioned Nick, stepping inside the low building.

"Ven I have anyding to store."

"How long have you been here?"

"Vell, not long. I just game in."

"How long, I mean, have you had this place for your business?"

"Vat is it to you?" came the question, with a sharper scrutiny. "Vat for you vish to know?"

"Merely from curiosity," said Nick, drawing nearer to him. "I saw you in the railway yard a short time ago, didn't I?"

"I vas dere," nodded the man. "You have eyes. Mebbe you might have saw me."

Nick laughed a bit grimly.

"I saw you, all right," he replied, with rather ominous intonation. "Do you go there after rags?"

"Junk," was the terse rejoinder.

"That all?"

"Vat all?" questioned the man, looking up sharply. "Vat for do you care vy I go dere?"

"Merely from curiosity," Nick repeated.

"Vell, you vas better pocket your curiosity," snapped the other. "Junk—that's vat I said."

"I heard you."

"For vat else would I go dere?"

"That's what I want to know," Nick said more sternly.

"Vell, you dake it out in vanting."

"See here, old man, this hair of yours don't appear quite——"

Nick broke off abruptly.

He had reached down while speaking and seized the man's soiled woolen cap and mop of gray hair, giving them a violent jerk.

They came away in his hand, while the gray beard of the bowed rascal was torn out of place.

The result was precisely what the detective had expected.

The removal of the disguise revealed the pallid face and distorted features of the knave who had threatened him in Madison Avenue only a few days before, those of Stuart Floyd.

Floyd evidently was expecting no less.

In reality, he appeared to have planned for it. Like a flash, lurching forward from his stool while Nick was speaking, he suddenly threw both arms with viselike clutch around the detective's legs, at the same time shouting, with frantic ferocity:

"Now, boys, quick! Get him! Get him! Get him!"

Nick Carter hardly knew where they came from, they came so quickly—the three ruffians who rushed into the place.

Two were powerful fellows in the neighborhood of forty, both armed with heavy bludgeons. That they meant business, moreover, and were out for bloodshed or murder, even, if it became necessary, was speedily apparent.

Nick realized on the instant that he had walked into a trap, an ambush from which escape would not be easy.

He reached for his revolver, bent upon putting up the fight of his life, but he could not draw the weapon.

For the frantic rascal on the floor, fiercely clutching Nick's legs, was wriggling to and fro so furiously that the detective was nearly thrown from his feet.

All the while, though the entire episode transpired in less than a quarter minute, Floyd was fiercely repeating:

"Get him, boys, get him! Get him! Get him!"

There was absolutely no occasion for these sanguinary commands.

For the ruffians who had entered instantly attacked the swaying detective from behind. They fell upon him like wolves upon a wounded stag.

Blow followed blow in quick succession, with merciless force, until Nick sank, dazed and bleeding, upon the floor, scarce conscious of what afterward transpired.

In a vague way, however, as one senses such things in a dream, or a hideous nightmare, Nick knew that he was being hurriedly bound and robbed of his revolvers. He heard the brutal voices of his assailants, but they sounded faint to him and far away.

He knew, in a dazed way, that the great heap of rags was hurriedly pushed aside, that a trapdoor which they had concealed was quickly opened, and that he then was hurriedly carried down several low steps and through a dark, earthy-smelling passage, then up other steps, and into a stone-walled room lighted only by the feeble rays of an oil lamp.

Then the cobwebs began to clear from his battered head.

He heard Floyd's hard voice more distinctly, as harsh and hard as nails. He could see the faces of his assailants more plainly, the two brutal ruffians, and the third none other than Bug Bannon.

"Get out, Bagley, and close the shed door," Floyd then was commanding. "You slip out, Bannon, and make sure no other dicks are around, and that none else is wise to this. Rope him to that ring in the wall, Gorman, hands behind him, and be sure that he's tied fast."

"Leave that to me," growled the ruffian.

"I told him I'd get him," Floyd added, in fierce exultation. "I warned him, damn him, to beware of the melting pot! I warned him! I told him I'd get him—and, curse him, now I've got him!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MELTING POT.

Nick Carter never forgot the scene at which he helplessly gazed later that evening.

He was seated on a bare earth floor, within four grim stone walls, to an iron ring in one of which he was securely bound.

Two narrow windows in the side walls were closed with tight-fitting iron shutters, precluding the escape of a ray of light from within.

The ceiling was crossed with great faded beams, between which could be seen the chinks of a square trapdoor, showing that there was a room above. A narrow wooden stairway in one corner led up to it.

In one of the end walls was a door covered with sheet iron, closed and securely locked. Near by was an excavation leading into the narrow underground passage, through which Nick had been carried by his assailants, and which evidently had been quite recently made from the rag shed to this secret refuge of the outlaws into whose hands the detective had fallen.

In a pile at one side of the room were numerous articles in cloth wrappings, some of which were partly displaced. Through these could be seen the glitter of yellow metal, and the dull luster of tarnished silver.

Obviously, these parcels had been brought there secretly and separately, or a few at a time, by the thieves then in possession of them.

There could be no mistaking what all this was—the contents of the three stolen cases—the valuable Waldmere plate.

In a temporary brick structure in the middle of the earth floor a coal fire was fiercely burning, forced by a bellows thrust through the low brickwork.

Above it, suspended from an iron frame, hung a heavy caldron, with a long ladle in it—and a quantity of silverware that was being rapidly melted.

In the earth floor near one of the walls were numerous rectangular holes, molds for receiving the melted metal, and from some of which the silver ingots already had been pulled with an iron hook, to make room for more of the costly fluid.

The room was almost as hot as an oven, and perspiration stood in great drops on the faces of the three men then at work there—Floyd, Bagley, and Gorman.

Nick Carter had been sternly watching them for some time. He had found that he had solved more than the mystery of the stolen Waldmere plate.

He had known for weeks of numerous plate robberies from the dwellings of wealthy suburban residents, till it had become a question in the minds of the police as to who were committing the crimes and how so much plate was disposed of successfully.

It no longer was a question in Nick Carter's mind. He knew, now, that he was in the secret quarters of the gang, and where Floyd had been and how employed since the looting of the Imperial Loan Company.

"Go up, Gorman, and open that trapdoor," Floyd suddenly commanded, wiping his dripping face and glancing up at the ceiling. "Then some of this infernal heat will go into the loft."

"So 'twill," nodded Gorman, red and glowing. "We've forgotten that."

He hastened up the stairway to obey, and Nick presently saw the square trapdoor raised and laid over on the upper floor.

Gorman leered down at him for a moment before returning.

Nick ignored him, however, but then said to Floyd, resuming a conversation that had ended when the miscreants began the work now engaging them:

"You'll suffer more heat than this, Floyd, for this night's work. Take my word for that."

"Not in this world," Floyd replied, with a sneer.

"No, in the next."

"I'm not going that way just now."

"You'll go sooner or later."

"I'll take chances on the heating system, Carter, all the same," Floyd said scornfully. "I'll get none the worst of it because of anything you have accomplished."

"Don't be so sure of that."

"Rats! We've got safely away with this stuff, as I gave you a hint when I last saw you. We've got you, too, as I warned you. All this ought to convince you, Carter, that I'm not to be easily cornered."

"Nor am I easily convinced on so doubtful a point. You'll get yours in time," Nick sternly predicted.

"You already are getting yours," Floyd retorted, laughing derisively.

"Perhaps."

"I warned you that I'd get you for having put me to the bad. You thought you were keen and clever when you picked me up in the railway yard. You picked up a live wire."

"Very well."

"Why, you bonehead, did you think I would not anticipate your seeking me there? I knew you would get after me in that way. I went there only to trap you."

"That now appears quite obvious," Nick said dryly.

"I knew that you would recognize me and follow me," Floyd went on, with malicious satisfaction. "I had the trap all laid. You are a fall guy, Carter, all right. I knew you'd walk into it."

"It has not occurred to you, perhaps, that I did so with open eyes," Nick said pointedly.

"Bunk!" sneered Floyd. "Tell that to the marines. Why would you have done that?"

"Merely to get a line on you rascals."

"At the risk of your life, eh?"

"Certainly. That's not uncommon," said Nick.

"Rot!" Floyd glared at him doubtfully. "If you walked into it with your eyes open, Carter, we'll make mighty sure to close them for you. You'll keep them closed, too. Take my word for that."

"Let it go at that, then," Nick said indifferently.

All the while, in grim amusement over this colloquy, Gorman and Bagley continued their work of melting the silver plate and pouring it into the earth molds.

The seething caldron glowed with the heat.

The fire burned intensely under it, forced by the wheezy bellows.

It was like a scene in the infernal regions.

The melting pot was getting in its work.

Floyd appeared to be making good.

Seeing him tear the cloth wrapping from a magnificent piece of gold plate, superbly embossed and engraved, Nick frowned more darkly and asked:

"Are you going to melt all of that gold plate, Floyd?"

"You can bet I'm going to melt it."

"That's a sacrilege."

"Call it what you like."

"Such plate could not be replaced in these days. That was the work of some of the finest goldsmiths in Europe. You can do better than melt it, Floyd," Nick earnestly protested, anxious to save the fine old plate from destruction, if possible.

"How better?" questioned Floyd curiously.

"By selling it back to Waldmere," said Nick. "He would pay thrice the intrinsic value of the metal."

"Think he would, eh?"

"I am sure of it."

"That's a good scheme, then, no doubt."

"You had better adopt it and save the plate."

"Mebbe I had, Carter, but I'll do nothing of the kind. The risk is too great."

"Don't let that deter you," Nick insisted. "A man as clever as you could safely make the deal and realize what the stuff is worth. You'd get by, all right."

"I'll get by, Carter, and you can bank on it," Floyd asserted confidently. "But I shall stick to the safe road. I'll put this stuff into shape that can be easily turned into cash. It will pay us handsomely enough, all right," he added, with an exultant leer.

"That's no pipe dream," growled Bagley, with eyes glowing. "It beats any stuff of the kind that I ever lamped. It ought to bring——"

He broke off abruptly when a low, peculiar whistle fell upon his ears. Though instantly recognized, he instinctively reached for his revolver.

"It's Bannon," snapped Floyd quickly. "Bannon or Vera."

"Sure!' put in Gorman, gazing

This was verified in a moment by the appearance of Bannon from the tunnel leading from the rag shed.

He came out of the ground like an imp out of Hades, with an evil gleam in his narrow eyes, and obviously in some excitement.

"Say, Floyd, I've been up against it," he cried at once. "I've been double-crossed by a scurvy whelp, who would have thrown us all down and into the hands of the dicks."

"Whom do you mean?" Floyd demanded, staring at him.

"Pilot Flynn."

"That cur!"

"Gee! Wait till I get back at him," Bannon fiercely threatened. "I'll pepper him as full of holes as a sieve."

"What do you mean?" snapped Floyd. "Tell me."

Bannon hastened to do so, describing the subterfuge of Patsy Garvan and stating what had followed.

It brought a murderous light into Floyd's eyes, while uglier scowls settled on the sweaty faces of Gorman and Bagley.

Nick Carter, listened with some misgivings, also, though he still felt quite that Patsy would yet contrive to accomplish what he had undertaken.

"But what led you to suspect?" Floyd questioned. "What put you wise to the game?"

"I wasn't wise, only suspicious, and I knocked him out to make sure," Bannon quickly explained. "I made sure, too, all right."

"How so?"

"Here's his barker and a pair of bracelets," said Bannon, producing them. "I knew his mug, all right, after I had downed him. He's one of this dick's push. His name is Patsy Garvan."

Floyd swung around and glared at the detective.

"What do you know about this, Carter?" he demanded.

"I'm not telling all I know," Nick bluntly answered.

"You're not, eh?"

"Not is right."

"By Heaven, I'll find a way to make you," Floyd harshly threatened. "I'm going to find out just where we stand, or——"

"Easy!" Bannon turned like a flash, then added quickly: "Oh, it's only the skirt. It's Vera."

She came by the same way as Bannon, with her skirts drawn around her to avoid the earthy walls, and with a look of alarm in her evil black eyes.

"Who's the stiff in the alley?" she asked abruptly, with a startled glance at the detective.

"Still there, is he?" Floyd quickly questioned, instead of explaining.

"Yes."

"He'll lie still for some time to come," Bannon viciously predicted. "I gave it to him good and strong."

"And I'll see that you get yours, in return," thought Nick, far from daunted by his own threatening situation.

"You ought to have downed him earlier, farther from here," said Floyd, doubtfully shaking his head.

"Why so?"

"He may get wise."

"Rats!" sneered Bannon curtly. "What can he make of it? He don't know why I came this way, nor which way I went after dropping him. He'll get fat trying to trail me from where I left him."

"Well, what's on your mind?" asked Floyd, turning to the woman again, to whom Bagley had hurriedly explained the situation. "Have you seen the girl, as you planned?"

"Want it in his hearing?" questioned Vera, with another glance at Nick.

"Why not?" snapped Floyd. "He cuts no ice, now that we have him where we want him. We'll finish him, along with this other good work, before morning."

"That will be the safest way," Nick coolly advised.

"Leave that to us."

"That's what I am doing—under protest."

"Have you seen the girl?" Floyd repeated, again turning to Vera Vantoon.

"Sure, I've seen her," Vera nodded.

"Were you expected?"

"That's what. I can always bank on Angel Face."

"Angel Face!" thought Nick, with a quick thrill of satisfaction. "She refers to Minerva Grand, as sure as I'm a foot high. Things are looking up. It's money to marbles that Chick shadowed the girl, then dropped her to follow this woman. He would not have forgotten her and her past relations with Stuart Floyd. He cannot be far from here. There'll be something doing presently that will give these rascals the surprise of their lives."

Nick did not for a moment think that Chick would have lost sight of this woman.

Now replying to Floyd's inquiry, Vera Vantoon told him of her meeting with Minerva, and reported in detail the information the girl had imparted.

Some of the color faded from Floyd's face while he listened.

Those of Bug Bannon, Bagley, and Gorman took on more serious expressions.

"What the devil did he want of hot water and a spoon?" Bannon suspiciously demanded, addressing Floyd. "What kind of a test could he have wanted to make?"

"I'll be hanged if I know."

"It don't go down, not down my throat," Bannon growled. "He had some other object. He may be putting something over that we don't know about."

"I'll darned soon find out!" cried Floyd, with eyes blazing. "What was it, Carter? What was your game?"

"You'll not find out from me," Nick curtly answered.

"Won't I?"

"Not by a long chalk."

"We'll see!" thundered Floyd, lifting from the melting pot the ladle half filled with liquid silver. "You answer! You tell me! Out with it—or I'll pour this down your infernal neck!"

He meant what he said—and he looked it.

CHAPTER IX.

DEAD ASHES.

Chick Carter whipped out his searchlight, crouching above the prostrate man he had found in the alley.

At the same moment a low moan broke from the victim of Bug Bannon's treacherous assault. Patsy's head was harder than the cowardly young ruffian had thought. Patsy was fast on his way to reviving.

The glare from the searchlight fell on his upturned face, and a low cry of dismay came from Chick.

"Great guns!" he muttered. "It's Patsy."

Patsy heard him, and the sound of the familiar voice was like a stimulant. It brought him completely out of dreamland.

"Oh, it's you, Chick," he said faintly. "Gee! that was a hard crack on the bean—but I'm still in the ring."

Chick heard him with a thrill of relief.

"By Jove, I thought you were done up, Patsy," he replied, raising him to a sitting position. "How are you feeling?"

"Better every second. I'll be on my pins in a minute."

"What happened? How did it occur?" Chick inquired.

It took Patsy only a few moments to inform him, and for Chick to state how he had discovered Vera Vantoon and afterward lost sight of her. Before they had finished, Patsy was on his feet, but with a look of disgust on his rather pale face.

"Hang it, then, we've lost both of them," he said dubiously. "What's to be done? The chief may be in dead wrong by this time."

"The fact that both of them vanished in this locality is significant," Chick replied. "If only one had come here, I might think nothing of it. Under the circumstances, however, it's ten to one that the gang has quarters in this section."

"Gee! there's something in that," said Patsy, quick to see the point. "In one of these old buildings, perhaps."

"Are you fit for a search?" asked Chick, still a bit anxious.

"As fit as a fiddle," Patsy assured him.

"Take one of my revolvers, then," said Chick, giving it to him. "We may run foul of some one."

"I'll be ready for him. I hope it may be that whelp that downed me. I can see where he'd get his."

Chick laughed softly.

"Come on," he muttered, leading the way. "We'll steal through the alley and have a look at the back of these buildings."

Patsy followed him.

For something like five minutes they searched cautiously and noiselessly back of the gloomy buildings and between the sheds and hovels, but could find in the darkness no trace of the vanished rascals, no clew to their whereabouts.

They then had brought up near the rag shed in which Nick had found the disguised crook, and some twenty yards from the grim and gloom-shrouded stone building.

"Gee! this don't look good to me!" Patsy whispered, at Chick's elbow. "They sure have given us the slip."

"It does look so," Chick quietly admitted.

"There isn't a sign of light from any of these miserable cribs. It ought to find its way out through some chink or nail hole, if they are under cover in any of them."

"True."

"We had better——"

"Hush! Stop a bit."

"What now?" Patsy whispered, noting the changed expression on Chick's face.

"There's something doing."

"What do you mean?"

"Look there."

Chick pointed to the stone building, not to its grim walls and black windows, from which not a twinkle of light could be seen—but higher, to a point above its low, flat roof.

In the middle of it was a scuttle and glass skylight—and Stuart Floyd had made one mistake that was to bring disaster.

In opening the trapdoor in the ceiling, which was nearly directly above the melting pot, he had forgotten the skylight in a line with the trapdoor.

Chick and Patsy had not, till then, looked up in that direction for a clew.

Now, however, both could see the faint glow that came up from below and stood out in relief, as it were, against the surrounding night gloom.

It was like the glow shed out from the open door of a brightly lighted hall.

"Holy smoke!" Patsy muttered, with a quick thrill. "There's some one in the old stone crib."

"More than one, Patsy, I suspect," Chick whispered.

"Can we get in?"

"Wait here while I have a look."

"Go ahead."

Chick glided away in the darkness, presently returning.

"I don't think we can get in on the ground floor," he said quietly. "The door and window shutters are of sheet iron, and all are securely closed."

"Gee! that sure smacks of something doing."

"I'm convinced of it, now."

"Could you hear anything from inside?"

"Not a sound," said Chick. "There is a way, however, by which we can look in."

"You mean?"

Chick pointed toward the roof.

"There's a skylight," he said quietly.

"Must be," Patsy tersely agreed. "But how can we get up there?"

"It's not more than eighteen feet to the edge of the roof. I climbed over several planks back here that are that long."

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Patsy, elated. "I've got you. We can lean one of the planks against the rear wall and get up there by means of it."

"Easily."

"We'll not be heard, either, through that stone wall."

"Not if we are careful."

"Come on," whispered Patsy impatiently. "Let's get the plank."

It did not take them long to find one that would serve their purpose, nor to lug it to the rear of the low building and place at an angle against the stone wall. It reached within a foot of the edge of the roof, and that was more than ample.

"Shoes off, Patsy," whispered Chick.

Both were ready within half a minute.

In another minute both were crouching on the roof.

Noiselessly they crept to the skylight and gazed down through the trapdoor on the red-glowing scene below.

"Thundering guns!" whispered Patsy, staring. "The rats are there, all right. They are melting a lot of silver plate."

"Part of the Waldmere plate."

"Surest thing you know."

They could not see Nick, owing to the location of the trap in the upper floor, but while listening intently—they heard him addressed by Floyd and his name mentioned.

"Holy smoke!" Patsy then whispered. "They've got the chief."

"I heard," Chick nodded, feeling over the skylight.

"Hadn't we better get help and force an entrance?"

"Floyd might send a bullet into Nick, in that case, before he could be prevented. There's a better way."

"What way?"

Chick held up one of the small panes of the skylight. He had found the putty dry and crumbling, and, after a moment, he had quietly removed the pane. Feeling through the opening, he then found that he could release the hook that secured the scuttle.

"That upper floor is less than seven feet below the skylight," he whispered. "We can let ourselves down to it without a drop. The noise down there will prevent our being heard, providing we are careful. There must be a stairway to the lower floor. We can steal down and hold up the whole gang."

Patsy nodded his approval.

"Better way is right," he murmured. "It looks like soft walking."

"It will enable us to protect Nick, also."

"That's the stuff. Safety first."

"Are you ready?"

"Ready as a trivet."

Working cautiously and deliberately, Chick succeeded in lifting the skylight without making a sound, and he laid it over on the roof.

"I'll go first, Patsy," he murmured.

Patsy merely nodded.

Chick let himself over the sill, then grasped the frame of the scuttle and lowered himself till his feet touched the floor some eighteen inches from the trapdoor.

Patsy followed him.

The scene below was, indeed, one that diverted the attention of the crooks from anything overhead.

It was at that very moment that Stuart Floyd, fiercely threatening the detective, had seized the ladle of liquid silver from the melting pot and was approaching with the evident intention of making good his infamous threat.

Chick Carter did not give him time to do so.

His revolver was out on the instant and its report rang like thunder above all other sounds.

Floyd went to the floor with a bullet in his shoulder, and the ladle fell from his lax hand.

Chick dropped to the edge of the trapdoor and thrust the smoking weapon through it.

"Hands up!" he yelled fiercely. "Up with them! He'll be a dead man who stirs!"

Patsy had darted toward the dimly lighted stairway and already was nearly down.

"Dead man is right!" he shouted, weapon leveled. "Move foot or finger, man or woman, and I'll shoot to kill!"

Without exception, the several crooks had knuckled to the sudden startling situation. As a matter of fact, they supposed the building was surrounded and that a posse of police were breaking in on them. Once their hands were up, however, it was all over but the shouting, as Patsy afterward said.

Within five minutes the crooks were secured, Floyd among them, he having suffered only a flesh wound.

Half an hour later all were in the Tombs, including Minerva Grand, the first step toward the punishment they deserved.

Midnight saw the priceless plate, or that most cherished by Waldmere, taken safely into his residence—and thus, crowning with complete success the splendid work of Nick Carter and his assistants, the sensational case ended.

The fire under the melting pot had become dead ashes.

THE END.

Notwithstanding the fact that Floyd and his gang had apparently been rounded up, Nick Carter and his associates were to have yet more trouble with this gang of blackmailers, crooks, and thieves. You will learn about these later developments in "The Duplicate Night; or, Nick Carter's Double Reflection," which you will find in the next issue, No. 141, of the NICK CARTER STORIES, out May 22d. Then, too, there will be the usual installment of the serial, together with other special articles which you will enjoy.

"TURN TO THE JURY, SIR!"

Some years ago a witness was being examined in a case of slander, when the judge required him to repeat the precise words spoken.

The witness hesitated until he riveted the attention of the whole court upon him; then fixing his eyes earnestly on the judge, began:

"May it please your honor, 'you lie and steal and get your living by stealing!"

The face of the judge reddened, and he immediately exclaimed:

"Turn to the jury, sir!"

Where's the Commandant?

By C. C. WADDELL.

CHAPTER I.

THE GLINT IN THE DARKNESS.

Colonel Vedant and his adjutant, Captain Ormsby Grail, hurried down to the Dolliver Foundry, one of the large industrial plants along Brantford's bustling seven miles of water front, in response to an urgent message from Otto Schilder, manager of the plant. It was ten o'clock at night, but as the Dolliver people were turning out some castings for a wireless telegraph mast of new design, to be erected at Fort Denton, and required frequent consultations with the commandant, there seemed nothing especially strange in the request.

On the arrival of the officers, however, they learned, to their surprise, that there was no desire for the colonel's presence, and the manager flatly disclaimed having sent for him. The old soldier stared incredulously, his somewhat florid face taking on a deeper flush behind his gray military mustache.

"Pardon me, Mr. Schilder"—he made little effort to conceal his irritation—"but do I understand you to say that it would have been impossible for any such message to be sent me from the foundry this evening?"

The manager removed his cigar, and rose from his desk to face the other.

"Positively so, colonel." He spoke emphatically, and with a slight German accent. "There has been nobody in the office since six o'clock except myself and Miss Griffin"—with a wave of the hand toward his stenographer—"and we have been wholly engrossed in making up some arrears in correspondence."

"You hear, Grail?" The colonel turned toward his adjutant. "Are you responsible for this blunder? Got the name twisted, or something of that sort, eh?"

"Hardly, sir." The younger officer appeared no less perplexed than his superior, but his tone was one of firm conviction. "The note was written on a letterhead of the Dolliver Foundry, and was ostensibly from Mr. Schilder; I am familiar with his signature. As to the contents, I could not well have been mistaken. You remember, I read the message over to you twice. The contents make small difference, anyhow, since Mr. Schilder denies having sent us a communication of any sort."

"Small difference," admitted the colonel, "except as offering a possible clew to the perpetrator of this hoax, for it cannot well be anything else, unless, indeed——" He paused abruptly, the umbrage he had shown giving way to something like concern. "Come, captain!" He addressed his companion a trifle peremptorily, at the same time backing toward the door. "We are detaining Mr. Schilder. Permit us to apologize for the interruption, sir, and let us——"

At this point, a remarkable thing happened. The electric lights went out, cutting short the colonel's apology, and shrouding not only the office, but the foundry yard outside in darkness.

For a moment Grail was absolutely blinded; then, as his vision cleared and the square of the open doorway became faintly visible, he saw cut across it a tiny flash of fire like the glow of a lightning bug in flight. No other sight or sound punctuated the interval, and almost immediately the lights came on again.

"Ah!" Schilder blinked before the sudden radiance. "The dynamo must have slipped a belt, or——" He halted, with a little gasp. "Why," he exclaimed, "what has become of the colonel?"

It was certainly astonishing. Not one of the three other occupants of the room had stirred. Grail and the manager stood in exactly the same position as before, and the stenographer still sat at her table with her fingers resting on the keys of her typewriter, but the colonel was gone.

With a common impulse, the two men stepped swiftly to the door, and glanced out across the yard. There had not been sufficient time for any one to cross it and reach the gate, yet the colonel was nowhere to be seen, and his erect, soldierly figure could not possibly have gone unrecognized in that wide-open space, and under the glare of the half dozen or more arc lamps now brightly burning. Nor could there be any question of his having strayed from the direct path in the darkness and being now hidden from their view by a pile of rubbish or material, for the inclosure was remarkably free from obstruction. Indeed, the last of what had been a towering scrap heap was being cleaned up, and, with the aid of an electric crane, loaded on cars by the force of men then at work.

"Well, what do you know about that!" Schilder muttered. Then, closely followed by Grail, he hurried across the yard to interrogate the old watchman at the gate. But the latter was firm in his protestation that no one had passed him. Even with the yard lights all out, he could still, he declared, have seen anybody leaving the place by the illumination from the street lamp on the corner.

"Then," said Grail, "he must have gone out some other way."

The manager waved his hand significantly toward the high board fence which completely surrounded the yard, and which was topped with sharp spikes to keep out pilferers. There was but one exit—the gate at which they had already made inquiry; the big doors leading into the foundry building were barred and padlocked.

"Perhaps he is still in the office," ventured Grail. "He might have had a seizure of some kind in the darkness, you know, and fallen behind a piece of furniture."

But even as he voiced the suggestion he realized its utter absurdity. Schilder's office contained nothing except the desk which could have concealed the body of a man, and the desk was pushed back close against the wall. Nevertheless, they made an inspection of the place, but entirely without result. Then, when the manager called in every man working in the yard, and questioned him, to no purpose, the searchers seemed to have come to the end of their tether.

"But it is preposterous, you know!" exclaimed Grail, attempting to throw off his misgivings. "There is, of course, some absolutely simple explanation, and the colonel is, no doubt, out at the post by this time, swearing about me for not putting in an appearance. May I use your telephone, Mr. Schilder?"

Inquiry at the fort elicited that Colonel Vedant had not returned, and no information regarding him could be gained from his quarters, the club, or any of his customary haunts. When Grail had gone through the entire list, and called up the post again, only to receive the same negative answer, he made no effort to conceal his growing anxiety. A suspicion of foul play strengthened in his mind. "If

not that," he asked, "why should the colonel, of his own accord, disappear in this absurdly mysterious manner? Colonel Vedant is not the sort of man to be waylaid or carried off without making at least a show of resistance, and I certainly heard no outcry or sound of a struggle. Did you?"

Schilder shook his head. No, no; there's nothing in that," he said impatiently. "How, please tell me, could such a scheme have been planned in advance, and put into effect, when we allow no strangers hanging around here under any pretext? But, overlooking all that," he argued, "and even granting that the old gentleman might have been knocked out by the sudden, silent blow of a blackjack or sandbag, how was he so quickly spirited away? The lights were out hardly more than long enough for one to draw a deep breath—surely not a sufficient time to get farther than ten or twelve steps from the door. Is it possible that with all those yard lights going again, the colonel could have been dragged or carried the length of the inclosure, and none of the men at work out there have noticed it?"

Grail made no immediate answer. He stepped to the door, and, leaning over, narrowly inspected the cinder-covered ground about the threshold. But no marks or footprints indicating a struggle rewarded his searching gaze; the surface was absolutely undisturbed. Then, all at once, he espied, a foot or two away, a small object. He glanced back over his shoulder, and, seeing that Schilder had turned to address a word of direction to the stenographer, reached out and quickly transferred it to his pocket.

It was a half-smoked cigarette—a cigarette of dull-gray paper, with a peculiar long pasteboard mouthpiece.

CHAPTER II.

THE CLEW THAT FAILED.

"There's no need to keep you any longer, Miss Griffin," Schilder said to the stenographer, as Grail came back toward him. "And—er—Miss Griffin, I guess it would be just as well if you didn't mention this occurrence to any one on the outside. We want no unnecessary notoriety, eh, captain?"

The adjutant agreed with him. "If you don't mind, though, Mr. Schilder," he said, "and if Miss Griffin will oblige me, I'd like to have her take down a note for me to Major Appleby. This matter ought to be reported to him at once, and I don't like to use the telephone. It will be very brief, Miss Griffin," he continued, turning to the girl. "You can take it direct on the machine. Only I will ask you to give me a carbon copy; we have to be very particular in the army in regard to all communications, you know."

Then, when she had slipped in her sheets of paper, and sat ready at her typewriter, he swung around so as to face Schilder, and crisply dictated:

"Please come at once, on receipt of this, to the office of the Dolliver Foundry, as I desire to confer with you on a matter of the greatest importance."

His eyes never for a moment left Schilder's face while the message was being transcribed, but if he had expected to see anything there, he was doomed to disappointment. The countenance of the manager remained as expressionless as a mask.

"What do you think of that?" Grail finally asked him.

"Well"—the other man was lighting a cigar—"it certainly seems urgent enough."

"Yes," said Grail dryly; "except for the address and signature, it is, word for word, the same as the note received by Colonel Vedant.

"Ah, thank you, Miss Griffin," he added, as he took the two sheets of paper which she handed him, and, signing the original, slipped it into an envelope. "I'm going to ask you, too, if you don't mind, to stop at the A. D. T. office on your way to the car, and have them rush this right out to the fort."

After this, nothing more was said until the girl had donned her hat and jacket and taken her departure. Grail thoughtfully folded up and put into his pocket the carbon copy, which he had been studying meanwhile under the light at the desk.

"I observe, Mr. Schilder," he said, "that the capital D on your typewriter blurs badly, and that the m is slightly chipped on one side. It will be interesting to compare this copy with the note received by the colonel, to see if both show the same defects."

The manager, however, merely shrugged his shoulders. "You still cling to the idea that the note must have come from here, eh? Well, you're on the wrong scent, captain—entirely on the wrong scent. A sheet of our letter paper would be no very difficult thing to get hold of, and when you come to look into the matter I think you'll find that the original note was written at post headquarters."

"At post headquarters! What do you mean by that?" demanded Grail.

"My dear captain," Schilder answered, "hasn't it struck you yet that the most likely person in the world to write that note to Colonel Vedant was—Colonel Vedant himself? Between ourselves, now—you are better acquainted with conditions than I—isn't there something which might have induced the old fellow to drop quietly out of sight?"

"Ah!" Grail spoke slowly. "So that is your solution, is it?"

"A more plausible one, at any rate, than to imagine he was kidnaped, or something of that sort," Schilder contended. "It wouldn't have been much of a trick for him to have slipped off his coat so as to look like one of the workmen, and then to have dodged through the gate when old Dennis wasn't looking. Men have done such things before, captain."

"Not men like Colonel Vedant," Grail insisted warmly. "He is the type that fights rather than runs away. Besides, in this case there is absolutely no ground for such a suspicion. His record is unassailable, and he is due for honorable retirement in a few months. He has no financial troubles. His health, for all his fifty odd years, is perfect, and no one who knows him could doubt his sanity for a moment. What possible reason could there be for such a man to chuck the game?"

"Perhaps a woman?" suggested Schilder.

"Rot! The only woman the colonel is interested in is his daughter, and he would never do anything to cause her the slightest distress or uneasiness. Why, man, on her account alone, if for no other reason, the theory you offer is simply ridiculous."

There was some further discussion along the same line, but of little consequence. Shortly after, Major Appleby, with a couple of officers from the fort, arrived in a motor car.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the major, a short and rather

apoplectic-looking warrior, when the situation had duly been made clear to him. "We must lose no time in getting to the bottom of this."

"Mr. Schilder," remarked Grail quietly, "is firmly convinced that the colonel took himself off voluntarily."

"Nonsense!" protested Major Appleby, and his companions promptly echoed the opinion. "Vedant is the last man in the world to have done a thing of that sort."

"All right," conceded the manager; "you gentlemen are probably more competent to judge on that point than I. Just the same, I surely am curious to see what other explanation you can get to fit the facts."

"Ah!" The major cocked his head importantly on one side. "That will no doubt come out in the investigation. The chief thing now is to learn just what the exact facts are."

The inquiry he set on foot, however, elicited nothing new, and in the end the newcomers had to confess themselves as completely baffled as Grail and Schilder. Still, it did not escape the shrewd eyes of the foundry manager, as the fruitless investigation proceeded, that certain more or less vague suspicions were forming in the minds of Appleby and his associates; and he gathered, too, not so much from anything that was said or done as by a sort of coolness in the atmosphere, that these were in some way hostile to the adjutant.

A sly smile flickered across his lips under the cover of his beard, and, with an air of impatience, he broke in on the aimless conjectures of the three officers.

"Come, come, gentlemen," he said; "all this amounts to nothing. And, since you seem determined to make it a case of foul play, I guess I had better start to do something on my own hook."

"You!" The major glared at him haughtily. "What have you got to do with it?"

Schilder laughed. "The Dolliver Foundry can hardly afford, my dear sir, to have a mystery of this sort taking place on its premises without at least a show of effort on my part to clear it up. Delay, moreover, merely makes the matter look worse for us; so, although I dislike needless notoriety as much as any of the rest of you, I——" Instead of completing the sentence, he reached out for the telephone on his desk.

"What are you going to do?" demanded Appleby sharply.

"Call up the chief of police, and place the matter in his hands."

"The chief of police!" The major gave a violent start, and glanced uneasily at his companions. Only Grail seemed unperturbed, and the side glance he cast at Schilder was distinctly skeptical. It was almost as though he said: "I dare you to make good your bluff."

The major lost no time, however, in entering a remonstrance.

"Oh, I beg of you, Mr. Schilder," he urged, "let us not do anything rash! There are—er—certain matters which I am loath to mention here, but which, provided the officers at the fort have sufficient time to sift them out, will, I am sure, bring a speedy solution. You bear me out in this, do you not, gentlemen?" he appealed to his two companions.

They assented, and it was noticeable that in doing so both carefully avoided looking in the direction of the adjutant.

Schilder, a mocking twinkle in his eye, turned toward Grail.

"And you, captain?" he asked. "Can you give me the same assurance?"

The young officer met his gaze steadily. "Why not?" he said. "To my mind, the investigation simply resolves itself into a matter of determining the authorship of the note received by the colonel, and surely we at the fort are as competent to handle that as some blundering police-man."

Major Appleby gave a grunt of recollection, and his manner toward Grail relaxed.

"Ah, yes," he said, with evident relief. "I had forgotten for the moment the existence of that clew. The note is at headquarters, I presume, captain?"

Grail nodded. "I left it on my desk, when the colonel and I came away."

"Then, come," urged the major, moving toward the door; "let us lose no time in taking a look at it. We can trust you, I suppose, Mr. Schilder, to take no action until you hear from us?"

"Anything in reason, major," the manager agreed. "And I certainly hope for all our sakes that you meet with quick success."

After he had returned from seeing the party off in their automobile, however, and had closed his desk for the night, he lingered a moment in the office before taking his departure.

"I wonder," he muttered thoughtfully, "if that man Grail is stringing me, or am I stringing him?"

Meanwhile, as the motor car swiftly left the factory chimneys and slumlike streets of the river front behind, and climbed the hilly streets back toward the fort, Major Appleby turned toward the adjutant, who sat beside him in the tonneau.

"What do you make of it all, captain?" he asked, in a conciliatory tone. "You were on the ground, and ought to be able to form a better judgment than any of the rest of us."

"It's gumshoe work," Grail answered; "a trick of some of those foreign spies who have been hanging around ever since Colonel Vedant started on his present series of experiments. They thought, no doubt, that, with a hurry call of this sort, they might catch him with some of the papers on his person."

"Then, you believe that Schilder is——"

Grail shook his head. "Too obvious," he objected. "Whatever else Schilder may be, he is not a fool."

"But whom else can we suspect, under the circumstances?" queried Appleby. "Have you any theory at all, captain, that will account for the mystery?"

The adjutant hesitated a moment. "I think I will wait to answer those questions, major, until after we have examined the colonel's note."

"Ah, true!" assented the other. "That must naturally be our starting point. And here we are!"

The automobile turned in from the tree-shaded street, and sped down the roadway past officers' row. It halted in front of headquarters, and the four passengers piled hurriedly out. Grail, abstractedly acknowledging the salute of the soldier on guard, pressed forward in the lead, and, unlocking the door, swung it open. There was no need to switch on the lights, as the room was already sufficiently illuminated by a night bulb which hung in front of the safe.

The adjutant, closely followed by the others, advanced to the desk, then paused, with a little gasp of bewilderment.

"Why," he exclaimed, "the note is gone! I am positive I left it here."

He turned to the colonel's "striker," who lounged sleepily in the adjoining room, to inquire if any one had been there in his absence.

"Not a soul, sir," was the answer.

"Then, have you yourself been in here, or touched any of the papers on the desk?"

"Haven't stirred from my seat, sir, since you and the colonel went."

That seemed to settle pretty well the question of outside interference, for, with the guard outside and this man seated where he could command the whole interior of the place, no person could have entered undetected. Yet the note was indubitably gone. The drawers of the desk were ransacked, the files gone over, even the floor thoroughly searched, without revealing the slightest trace of it. With all the doors and windows closed, there was no chance of it having been carried away by some frolicsome breeze.

Major Appleby regarded Grail with a portentous frown. "Captain," he said stiffly, "this is very, very strange."

CHAPTER III.

UNDER SUSPICION.

There was little sleep at Fort Denton that night. Two o'clock found the lights still burning brightly in Major Appleby's quarters, where most of the officers of the post were assembled. Conspicuous by his absence from this gathering, however, was the adjutant, Captain Grail. He had been there at an earlier hour to join in the deliberations, but after once more making a report of the circumstances connected with Colonel Vedant's disappearance, he somewhat stiffly withdrew. He sensed in the conference that same feeling of doubt and hostility toward him which had manifested itself in Appleby and his companions on first hearing the story, and his self-respect would not permit him to remain.

After his departure, a rather uneasy silence settled down on the council. A few pointless remarks were made, but for the most part the group devoted themselves to their cigars, and studied the pattern of the carpet.

Finally, however, Captain Dobbs, the surgeon—a bald, blunt-spoken old fellow—brought things to an issue.

"What's the use of mincing matters?" he boomed, glancing defiantly around the circle. "Every man here believes that Grail's at the bottom of this thing. Then why not get down to cases, instead of sitting around here like a pack of dummies?"

A little gasp, partly of relief, partly of surprise at such plain speaking, ran around the room, and everybody glanced involuntarily toward Major Appleby where he sat at the head of the table.

"H'm!" The major cleared his throat, and moved a bit uncomfortably under the scrutiny. "Without—er—going quite so far as our friend Dobbs," he finally ventured cautiously, "I take it that no one here will deny there is some reason in what he says. We must be prudent, though, gentlemen. Remember, the honor of the army is involved."

"Prudent! Ha!" The doctor gave a scornful cackle. "Why, the whole post has been like a whispering gallery all afternoon. I doubt if there's a man on the reservation, even a cook, leg or colonel, who hasn't had a cocktail at his lips every time anybody mentions the name his business about Grail. The only person who didn't seem to be wise to it was Grail himself. Now, let's cut out all this innuendo and gossip, and look the facts squarely in the face. If the report that's been going around is true, it's unquestionably got a bearing on the affair we're investigating; if not, the sooner we put a stopper on it and turn our searchlights in another direction, the better for all concerned. In either event, I guess the honor of the army will take care of itself."

There was a murmur of approval as the surgeon finished speaking, followed by calls from various parts of the room for Hemingway; and eventually, in response to these demands, a flushed young lieutenant rose rather reluctantly to his feet.

"Mr. Hemingway," the major said, "you seem to be the person best qualified to make a statement in this matter. Will you, therefore, repeat for the benefit of us all, the communication which you made in confidence to Mrs. Appleby and myself this afternoon?"

"In confidence—to Mrs. Appleby!" the doctor snorted, scarcely taking the trouble to lower his voice. "No wonder it was all over the post in less than half an hour."

In the general eagerness to hear Hemingway, however, his growling passed unnoticed, and the young lieutenant, shifting unhappily from one foot to the other, commenced his story.

"In the first place," he said, glancing appealingly around the circle of officers, "and as I told Major Appleby, I don't want any one to think that I've been up to any sneaking or underhand business. But when a thing came right up and slapped me in the face I couldn't help taking notice of it, especially after the colonel told all of us that he wanted us to be on our guard during the course of these experiments."

"Cut out the excuses," protested one of his auditors. "It's the facts we want to get at."

"Well, then," cried Hemingway defiantly, "I say that Captain Grail has been having dealings with Sasaku, the Jap waiter at the mess, which are open to very grave suspicion. I am in charge of the mess this month, as you all know, and I had noticed that Grail seemed to have considerable to say to the Jap when he dropped in for his meals; but I never attached any importance to the matter until to-day at noon, when I saw him hand Sasaku a long envelope, which the latter immediately slipped under his jacket. Then, I will admit, I began to get a little worked up, for there was a certain furtiveness about the transaction which I didn't altogether like; so, as soon as Grail left, I promptly nailed Sasaku, and demanded to know what it was the captain had given him."

"And he lied, of course!" commented a former mess manager, out of the depths of his experience. "Probably told you that you must have been mistaken."

"No," returned Hemingway; "he simply informed me coolly that it was none of my business, and gave me notice that he was quitting his job."

"Why didn't you grab the impudent beggar, and search him?" another officer broke in.

"Well"—the lieutenant flushed again—"I didn't want to make any blunder, don't you know, so I decided to report the matter first to Major Appleby before taking any decisive action; and by the time I got back to the mess again the Jap had cleared out, bag and baggage."

"Cleared out! Where?"

"That's the question." Hemingway shook his head. "I've had Corporal Stone and half a dozen men out ransacking the town for him since four o'clock, and not a trace can be found. We think he must have sneaked aboard a train somehow, and got away, unless——" He paused.

"Unless," Major Appleby pointedly finished, "his departure may have some connection with the far more serious matter of the colonel's disappearance."

"Has any one put this business about the Jap up to Grail?" the surgeon inquired, with a frown.

"Not directly," Appleby admitted; "that is, unless the colonel may have mentioned it to him. He was really the only one who had an opportunity, for Grail left the post shortly after the occurrence, and did not return until nine o'clock, and from that time until they set out for the foundry the two were closeted together in the office. Vedant, however, was rather inclined to pooh-pooh the whole matter, and he may very easily have failed to speak."

"Can any one doubt, though, that Grail knew what was in the wind?" demanded young Hemingway hotly. "Why, the very way he left us here to-night showed it. I say, too," he insisted, "that a man who'd been caught selling secrets to a Japanese spy, and saw court-martial looming up ahead of him, couldn't well think of a smoother plan to sidetrack inquiry and shift attention from himself than to have the colonel abducted."

"But that would indicate that this fellow Schilder was in on the deal, too," objected one of the officers who had not yet spoken. "And what interest could he——"

"Schilder? Pshaw! He was only a convenient tool," interrupted Hemingway. "Believe me, he's as much in the dark as anybody else."

"How could the game have been worked without his connivance, though?" inquired the other.

"Humph! Trust a pack of slick Japanese to handle that all right." Hemingway gave a toss of the head. "Knowing the colonel's movements in advance, what would have been easier than for them to secret themselves about the foundry yard; then, at the psychological moment, cut off the lights and rush the colonel out and away. With their agility and cunning, a trick like that would be simply pie to them."

"How do you explain this business about the note from Schilder, though?" broke in another questioner. "You think, of course, that Grail or the Jap forged the note that was received; but, if so, why doesn't Grail show it up now, instead of making things look worse for himself with the assertion that it has disappeared?"

"Ah, that was the smoothest part of the whole deal," declared the youthful investigator. "He knew that he was bound to be suspected, didn't he? And he knew, too, that documentary evidence of that sort, subjected to such close examination as would naturally be given it, might lead to his detection. So what does he do but get it out of the way, and at the same time fog the issue with another touch of apparent mystery."

His emphatic arguments began to carry weight with the rest. It was at least a solution that he offered, and, groping about in the dark as they were, they were ready to accept almost any theory that bore the color of plausibility.

"I think," said Dobbs, the surgeon, voicing a general sentiment, "it's about time for us to put this matter up to Grail straight, and see what he has to say for himself."

The major summoned his striker. "My compliments to Adjutant Grail, and ask him if he can make it convenient to come here at once to answer a few questions."

In less than five minutes the messenger was back with the astonishing reply:

"The adjutant's compliments, sir, and he wishes to know if you care to put your request in the form of an order. If not, sir, he does not care to discuss anything with the officers to-night."

The major grew red with indignation at the injury to his dignity, and the surgeon growled darkly that the answer bore out his suspicions. But Appleby was not a man of snapshot action, and he said, with an assumption of chilly dignity:

"Very well; say to the adjutant, with my compliments, that I shall issue no orders to-night." Then, turning to the officers, with a portentous shrug, he added: "We will await the developments of to-morrow."

CHAPTER IV.

MYSTERIOUS ASHES.

After sending his curt message to Major Appleby, Grail sat in the office at headquarters, whither he had betaken himself from the meeting, smoking fiercely, and glowering at a spot on the wall. He had set himself in defiance of the whole post, and he could not but feel that he was in the right. At any rate, he scorned to defend himself against the aspersions of a blunderer like Appleby, or an officious young ass like Hemingway; for, as it happened, he knew of the story set afloat by the mess manager, Colonel Vedant having detailed it to him jestingly during their hurried trip to the foundry. Grail had been prevented then from offering any explanation, owing to their arrival at Schilder's office.

Rather than make such an explanation now, he vowed he would be drawn and quartered, for he bitterly resented the attitude taken by his brother officers, their readiness—nay, almost eagerness—to believe the very worst of him.

Grail loved his profession. More than once he had refused flattering offers to leave it for a career in civil life. But now, in his hot indignation, he declared that not another week should find him wearing the uniform and associating with such double-faced, intriguing cads.

On the impulse of the moment, he stepped over to his desk, and, snatching up a pen, started to write out his resignation. But as he blotted the sheet before affixing his signature he paused, with an exclamation of annoyance, to find that the lines he had written were streaked with fine gray dust, which had fallen on the paper. A sort of gritty powder, it seemed to be, like the dust which rises from the handling of filed papers or documents. Without giving the matter second thought, Grail was about to tear up the blurred resignation and start to draft another one, when his attention was suddenly caught by a flake of the powder slightly larger than the others.

It was a tiny shred of paper, but what especially aroused his interest was that it showed the trace of a lithographed letter "V" of the peculiar style and shading used as a heading by the Dolliver Foundry.

Quickly he caught up the blotter he had been using, and shook it over a sheet of carbon paper, for there had flashed into his mind a prompt suspicion as to the nature

of that dust. That it had fallen from the blotter there could be no question, and he recalled distinctly that he had left the mysteriously missing note lying on that blotter when he and the colonel took their hasty departure.

A moment or two gave him all the confirmation of his suspicion that he required, for under his vigorous shaking there sifted down on the dark surface several fragments, from a sixteenth to a thirty-second of an inch in diameter, on which he could plainly decipher indications of typewriting.

Snatching up a reading glass belonging to the colonel, he bent over these to satisfy himself he had made no mistake; then straightened up, with a muttered expletive and a little, puzzled frown between the eyes.

The glass brought out on one of the specks what appeared unquestionably the upper half of an "m"—and, what was more, the letter was slightly chipped on one side.

Grail leaned over to subject the fragment to a second examination, and make sure that he had not been misled; then drew from his pocket the carbon copy of the note he had dictated to Schilder's stenographer, and compared the two impressions. They were alike, defect and all, as two pennies struck from the same die. One was forced to the conclusion that they had been made by the same machine.

Dropping his chin into his hand, the adjutant sat staring almost incredulously at the telltale speck in front of him. This knocked into smithereens the entire theory he had evolved as to the disappearance of Colonel Vedant, for, despite the pains he had taken to secure a copy of the note from Schilder's typewriter, he had never really believed that the original summons had come from there.

Now, however, he was driven to a fresh line of speculation. Recalling the foundry manager's freely expressed insinuations, he arose half impatiently, and tested the two typewriting machines used at headquarters. There were, as he expected, no point of similarity shown with the copy of the note he had caused to be transcribed by Miss Griffin. The "m" on both machines was clear-cut and flawless; there was no indication of blurring on the "D."

Returning to the desk, he resumed his perplexed contemplation of the fragments on the sheet of carbon paper. It seemed certain that Schilder must have sent the decoy message, relying on its speedy disintegration to cover up his tracks. And right there another consideration arose to muddle him: How had this disintegration been accomplished? Hitherto he had been so intent on establishing the identity of these specks of typewriting with the missing message that he had not stopped to question the agency which could so quickly and thoroughly destroy a stout sheet of linen paper.

"Some powerful chemical, doubtless," he reflected, recollecting that the note had been a trifle damp when he drew it from the envelope; and with this suggestion, he scraped together a little pinch of the dust to taste and smell of it. The tests confirmed his opinion. There was a faint, pungent odor to the particles, which, although familiar, he could not exactly place; and one of them, applied to his tongue, produced a slight burning sensation. The paper undoubtedly had been treated with some solution, which, in drying, reduced it to shreds.

He carefully transferred what remained of it to an envelope, in order to have his conclusions verified and the exact nature of the solvent determined by expert analysis; but he really needed no such corroboration. He was fully satisfied that the demolition of the message must have been effected in the way he assumed.

With so much settled, though, he seemed in no way relieved. Indeed, the frown of perplexity on his forehead grew deeper, and, seated there before his desk, he fell into a brown study.

Why, he thought, should Schilder have gone to so much trouble to get rid of this note, when he could so easily have supported his denial of writing it by the simple expedient of using another machine? As he himself had said to Grail, it would be quite a job, without other clews, to trace, among all the hundreds of machines in a city like Brantford, the particular one on which a specific communication was written.

"No," the adjutant said aloud, fishing from his pocket the half-smoked cigarette he had found at the threshold of the foundry office, and, surveying it with a decisive nod, "I can't be so far off the track. This new complication simply means that the trail is a bit more involved than I thought. However"—he shrugged his shoulders with returning resentment—"that is something for the bunch of wiseacres down the row to work out. I'm done with the whole business." And once more he drew a sheet of paper toward him to indite his resignation.

With his pen dipped in the ink, he hesitated. There came a natural reluctance to quit in this way under fire. The fresh developments he had unearthed, too, served as a challenge to his ingenuity. He had a well-defined theory to account for the disappearance of the colonel, and, after his first anxiety at Schilder's office, had not entertained any serious alarm as to the outcome. It was, he believed, merely a bold attempt on the part of some of the foreign spies who had been hanging around the post of late to obtain information in regard to the experiments in progress there. They must have become aware of the colonel's habit of carrying home with him at night the reports made to him, in order that he might digest them at his leisure. Since the coup had failed, however, Colonel Vedant having no papers with him that evening, and being the last person in the world to divulge under duress or otherwise any official secrets, Grail felt satisfied that the captive would be released just as soon as those responsible for the outrage were safe beyond the reach of retribution.

He had not really credited Schilder with any hand in the affair. On that one point, at least, he was agreed with Lieutenant Hemingway, regarding the German merely as a rather thick-headed dupe who had unwittingly allowed his establishment to be used as a theater for the enterprise.

Now, however, with the seeming assurance that the decoy message must have come from the typewriter at the foundry, he began to wonder if he had not been taking too much for granted. One was certainly justified in believing that either the manager or his stenographer must have had knowledge of the writing of the note.

"Suppose," Grail speculated, "the assumption I've been going on is a mistake? By Jove, I'm not infallible, and I've got no proof to support me—that is, nothing you could call real proof. Suppose, then, that there's more to this job than I've been willing to concede, and that the old colonel is actually in danger? Have I got the right, merely from personal pique, to stand from under and leave the old boy to the mercy of a set of bunglers like Appleby and his crew?"

While he hesitated, his glance happened to fall on the pen he still held between his fingers, which he had picked up from the desk at random. It was a gold one, belonging to the colonel—a gift from his daughter, Meredith, as was shown by the tiny plate affixed to the handle, with the inscription: "Merry Christmas. M. L. V."

Before the adjutant's mind rose suddenly the vision of the fair-haired, lovely girl, so devotedly attached to her father. He knew what this affair would mean to her, how deeply she would be affected, whether there were any actual menace in the situation or not. He laid down his pen, and, picking up the form of resignation he had drafted, tore it across, and dropped it into the wastebasket.

"I've got to stick it out," he muttered. "I've got to stick it out and clear this thing up—for her sake!"

His mind made up, he threw himself whole-heartedly into his task. A glance at his watch showed him it was after three o'clock, but no thought of sleep suggested itself to him. Instead, he caught up his hat and coat, and started out to take another look over the scene of the disappearance.

But there was nothing new to be gained, he found. The foundry yard, silent and deserted now, the last vestige of the scrap heaps cleared away, and only the idle crane, with its long, sweeping arm at rest, to serve as a reminder of the evening's earlier activity, offered nothing more in the way of a clew; nor could old Dennis, at the gate, although garrulous enough, add any fresh information to what he had already told.

Leaving him after a brief colloquy, Grail thoughtfully strolled down to the railroad tracks skirting the banks of the river, and patrolled them slowly the length of the foundry inclosure and back, climbing up on each of the scrap-loaded freight cars standing on the siding to investigate, but only to drop down again every time, with a shake of the head. The night was beginning to give way now to the first faint gray of the summer dawn. More and more distinctly the different features of the water front revealed themselves—the chimneys of the big smelter, Brantford's largest industry; the railroad machine shops beyond; and, overhead, dark and shadowy against the sky, the dim perspective of the great bridge stretching across the stream.

The horizon flushed into pink and crimson; the gilded cross of a steeple off in the distance flashed with the first beams of the rising sun; somewhere up the river a factory whistle blew. Morning had come.

Only the wide river was invisible now, blanketed in the thick mist which hung over its swift, muddy current. Grail stood a moment staring out at the impenetrable veil; then, obliged to step swiftly from the tracks for the passage of an express train, turned, and made his way back past the gate of the foundry.

As he reached old Dennis, he halted suddenly, and looked to glance sharply once more out over the mist-enveloped stream.

"What is that noise?" he inquired.

The old gateman cupped his wrinkled fingers behind his ear, and bent his head to listen.

"Is it th' chune, chune, chune ye mane?" he returned. "Sure, that must be a automobile over in th' bottoms."

"No," Grail shook his head. "That's the exhaust of a motor boat, if I ever heard one."

"A motor boat!" scoffed Dennis. "Wid all thim sand bars out there! Sure, there's a loonytick runnin' it, thin. Wy, sorr, nobody don't niver sail motor boats on this river. Th' boss just had wan iv th' things shipped in yistedah, he was tellin' me, but 'tis not on no river he'll be thryin' it. He's goin' to have it tuk out to Lake Manawa."

A quick flash shot into the adjutant's eye at this information, but his tone betrayed only a polite interest.

"So Mr. Schilders is going to have a boat out at the lake this summer, eh?"

"As I tell ye, sorr. An' sure it may be out there already f'r all that I know. He was dickerin' wid a felly yisteday afthernoon to haul it out f'r him."

Grail merely nodded, and turned the conversation to another channel. The chug-chug which had caught his attention had faded away by this time, and there seemed nothing to keep him there, but still he lingered on, chatting with the old watchman.

It might have been observed, though, that he directed an occasional keen glance toward the mists, thinning fast now in the rays of the rising sun, and that when at last the vapors were entirely dissipated, and the river visible from shore to shore, a little frown of disappointment gathered between his eyes. On all the broad expanse of the tawny stream there was no craft of any kind to be discerned. He bade old Dennis good morning, and betook himself back to the post.

TO BE CONTINUED.

TIPS TO YOUNG PITCHERS.

HOW TO CURVE A BALL.

To be able to curve a ball is the ambition of every young player. If he happens to be the pitcher of his team, his desire is all the stronger. He wants to fool the other fellows when they come to the bat. He cannot be blamed for that. But while curve pitching is undoubtedly a great accomplishment, it must be remembered that in the old days of baseball many brilliant battles were won with the straight-arm delivery. It is not absolutely necessary, therefore, to curve a ball in order to win success. The writer vividly recalls the famous games in the early seventies in the neighborhood of New York. He was a boy then, and walked miles to see the contests. A curved ball was unknown then, so far as the pitching was concerned. And the pitchers were very effective, too. They studied the weakness of the batsmen, just as the pitchers do now. And that is the study all young pitchers must pursue. Begin your work by pitching a straight ball. You cannot gain control in a better way. As you are young in pitching experience, so also are your opponents young in their knowledge of batting. If you watch them closely you will perceive very quickly that nearly every one of them swings his bat at about the same height every time. For instance, you will notice that the first batter will swing his bat just in front of his waisthand. In order to fool him, pitch the ball a little higher or a little lower than that point. The next batter may snap his bat high. Give him a high ball, but a few inches lower than he is likely to strike. The rule is by no means infallible, but it is a good one. It takes a boy a long time to overcome the inclination to swing in the same way every time he strikes. There is another important point to remember: Do not give the batsmen a chance to hit the

ball with the end of their bats, if you can avoid it. This is simple enough if the batter stands close to the plate. You can keep the ball well in on him without much trouble. But when he stands back in the box, you must use discretion. Try to coax him with a ball or two just inside the plate. If he refuses to "bite," then, of course, you'll have to put it over. As you improve in your work, you can begin to practice curves.

Curve pitching cannot be taught by book or other directions. It must be learned by actual practice and experience. The principles of making a ball curve, however, may be explained. Let the young aspirant grasp the ball firmly in his hand, giving the pressure with his forefinger and middle finger. The other two fingers should be drawn in toward the palm. Next let him snap the ball first out of one side of the hand and next out of the other side. He will soon learn the effect these movements have on the ball. Then he must practice faithfully to so control it as to make the curves useful. Strange as it may seem, it is much more difficult for the beginner to throw or pitch a straight ball than one that describes an arc in its course. This is so because of the natural tendency of the player to throw the ball out of the side of his hand. To pitch a straight ball, it is necessary that the two fingers which grasp the ball should be straight up and down, with their backs in front of the player as he throws. Beyond these few hints it is almost impossible to give any intelligible instructions. It will depend almost entirely on the young player's ability, inclination, and perseverance, how much of a success he will make at curve pitching. He cannot have too much practice, but he should take care not to overexert himself. It is not necessary to exert all his force. He can practice curves without putting his greatest speed into the ball.

DRUNKEN MONKEYS.

Did you ever hear that monkeys were an intemperate race of creatures? It is true. They actually get tispy when they get the chance; but the punishment of their crime is something terrible even for a tipsy monkey. They are not merely taken to prison for safety and locked up for a few hours. There are no monkey policemen to do them that service, and we have not heard that there are any monkey magistrates to give them a severe lecture in the morning, fine them a few dollars, and tell them not to do it any more. No, it seems there are none of these beautiful provisions for Jacko's safety and comfort provided in his native land, and so he falls into the hands of his enemies, and lifelong imprisonment, or even banishment to colder climates, is the punishment.

Like men, monkeys are easily outwitted when under the influence of liquor. They have human vices, and love stimulants. In Darfour and Sena, Africa, the natives make a fermented beer, of which the monkeys are passionately fond. Aware of this, the natives go to the parts of the forest frequented by the monkeys, and set on the ground calabashes full of the enticing liquor. As soon as the monkey sees and tastes it, he utters loud cries of joy that soon attract his comrades. Then an orgy begins, and in a short time they all show degrees of intoxication. Then the negroes appear. Some of the drinkers are too far gone to distrust them, but apparently take them for larger species of their own genus. The negroes take some up, and these begin to weep and cover them with maudlin kisses. When the negro takes one by the hand to lead him off, the nearest monkey will cling to the one who thus finds a support, and endeavor to go on also.

Another will clutch at him, and so on, until the negro leads a staggering line of ten or a dozen tipsy monkeys. When finally brought to the village, they are securely caged and gradually sobered down; but for two or three days a gradually diminishing supply of liquor is given them, so as to reconcile them by degrees to their state of captivity.

AN ANTIQUE MEAL.

"I have eaten apples that ripened more than eighteen hundred years ago; bread made from wheat grown before the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea; spread it with butter that was made when Elizabeth was Queen of England, and washed down the repast with wine that was old when Columbus was playing barefoot with the boys of Genoa," said a gentleman at the club the other day.

The remarkable "spread" was given by an antiquary named Gorbel, in the city of Brussels. The apples were from a jar taken from the ruins of Pompeii, that buried city to whose people we owe our knowledge of canning fruit.

The wheat was taken from a chamber in one of the smaller pyramids, the butter from a stone shelf in an old well in Scotland, where it had lain in an earthenware crock in icy water, and the wine came from an old vault in the city of Corinth.

There were six guests at the table, and each had a mouthful of bread and a teaspoonful of the wine, but was permitted to help himself liberally to the butter, there being several pounds of it. The apple jar held about two-thirds of a gallon, and the fruit was as sweet, and the flavor as fine, as though it had been packed yesterday.

THE KEENEST EYESIGHT.

Like every other sense, that of sight improves by use under healthy conditions, and therefore the people who have the greatest exercise of their vision in the open air, under light of the sun, have the best eyesight. Generally speaking, savage tribes possess the keenest eyesight, acquired through hunting.

Natives of the Solomon Islands are very quick at perceiving distant objects, such as ships at sea, and will pick out birds concealed in dense foliage some sixty or seventy feet high. Shepherds and sailors are blessed with good sight; the Eskimo will detect a white fox in the snow a great distance away, while the Arabs of the deserts of Arabia have such extreme powers of vision that on the vast plains of the desert they will pick out objects invisible to the ordinary eye at ranges from one to ten miles distant.

Among civilized peoples, the Norwegians have better eyesight than most, if not all, others, as they more generally fulfill the necessary conditions. The reason why defective eyes are so much on the increase in this and many European countries lies in too much study of books in early life, and in badly lighted rooms.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Big Indiana Gas Well.

A gas well which gives more than 12,000,000 feet volume has been drilled in half a mile from Linton, Ind., on the Gillett farm. It is the largest gusher in the central States.

Missouri River's Jokes with Farmers.

Suppose that, years ago when you were a young man, you came to Missouri and bought a farm on the banks of the Missouri River, and spent the next fifteen or twenty years in clearing the land and bringing it into a high state of cultivation. And then suppose that, just when you had begun to derive some benefit from your years of toil, the river should suddenly reach out and swallow up about half your farm.

Then suppose that the river, after keeping your farm for several years, should grow seemingly repentant and replace your farm, you would no doubt feel that all the land within the bounds mentioned in your deeds was your own as much as it ever was.

But that would all depend on the precise manner in which the river replaced your land. That is where the accretion law of Missouri comes in, and it is a fearful and mysterious thing. If the river, in putting your land back, began piling it up against your bank and continued doing so, the land to the water's edge would be yours, even if it went beyond your original boundaries. But if the river, as it often does, should first throw up a bar out in the channel and then gradually fill up the space between that and your land until finally the current changed and left the island thus formed joined to your land, you would have no claim to any land thus formed. It would belong to the county, and could be surveyed and sold to the highest bidder, and the money it brought would go to the school fund.

The Missouri River is a malicious stream, and if it ever comes to judgment, will have a lot to answer for. Instead of pursuing its course in an orderly manner and sticking to one established course, it is forever changing, eating away the bank on one side and throwing up new banks on the other side, cutting out old sand bars here and building new ones there, so that the main channel is never the same for very long at a time.

In Holt County, near Fortescue, there has been a great deal of excitement lately, caused by the disputes over the possession of some of the land thus formed, commonly known as "bar land." Several men had fenced land which was claimed under deed by John C. Hinkle, a Civil War veteran, who has lived on this land for the last fifty years. About fifteen years ago the river took five hundred acres of Mr. Hinkle's land and afterward put it back as a bar. Mr. Hinkle claimed the land on the ground that the bar had made to his land, and the other men claimed it on the ground that it had been put back as an island, which finally joined Mr. Hinkle's land, and was therefore as much theirs as any one's. The court upheld the squatters' claim that the land did not belong to Hinkle, and this decision was the signal for squatters to rush in and seize bar land all along the river front. In the last thirty days perhaps a dozen men have settled on these bars.

The fact of possession seems to be given considerable weight in this matter, and the land has generally been seized in the night. A squatter will pick out a piece of land that most suits his fancy, get some help, slip in at night, put a fence around it, and build a shack on it. Of course, it is not much of a house or much of a fence, but it is enough to establish proof of possession.

Sometimes two different men will have designs on the same piece of land, or perhaps the man whose deed calls for this land will offer objections to its being seized, and these conditions have given rise to several exciting encounters. Several houses have been torn down, many fences cut to pieces and in at least one instance men have been escorted from the land of their choice at the point of a Winchester, with instruction to "beat it" and not to come back. While no blood has been shed so far, it is freely predicted that it is only a matter of time until somebody is carried out "feet first."

The county has ordered the land surveyed, with the intention of selling it to the highest bidder, but the law says that the ones in possession have a right to buy it at the highest bid, so that even if the county sells the land, the ones actually on the ground have a big advantage. This fact will probably cause others to try to seize land before the survey is made.

The land is not so very valuable except in a dry year, as it is liable to overflow any time the river rises a few feet.

Cowboy Sheriff.

Many who have visited the Pawnee Bill and Buffalo Bill Wild-West Shows wonder what has become of all the likely looking cowboys whose daring feats ahorse and with the lasso excited wonder and admiration.

Some are with other shows, some perform for moving pictures, but most of them have quit the business and settled down. Among those who quit when Pawnee Bill and Buffalo Bill closed is Tom Tait, who has located in Gillette, Wyo., county seat of Campbell County, where he has been elected sheriff. All his life has been spent on the cattle ranges of Wyoming, Montana, and the Dakotas, with the exception of the time he was on the road with the show. As a tamer of wild horses he has few equals, and as a "cow hand" none at all.

All Six Died with Boots On.

The Grim Reaper has surely played relentless and strange havoc with the Law family, of Muscatine, Iowa. Brad E. Law, a popular grocer, died recently while sitting in a chair at his home. He died "with his boots on," so to speak, and so did his two brothers, his father, and his father's two brothers. One of the grocer's brothers, an engineer, was struck by a piece of a flying wheel, which broke and severed his head, and the other brother died while at the dinner table. His father died while plowing in the field, and one of his father's brothers died in the pulpit, while preaching a sermon. His father's other brother died while driving to town on his farm wagon.

They all met death while they were not expecting it. Neither of them was sick before his death, and sickness was not the cause of any of the deaths.

Tourists Welcome in Canada.

Numerous items have appeared lately in the press, advising residents of the United States to obtain passports when visiting or passing through Canada. Officials of the Canadian Pacific Railway made inquiries of the government at Ottawa whether passports are now required. The government announces that its officials are in no way interfering with bona-fide tourist traffic, and that persons desirous of visiting points of interest in Canada or of passing through Canada en route to other places will be accorded the same courteous treatment as was customary before the outbreak of war, and that passports are not required.

Why Belgium Thanks United States.

More than $21,500,000 has been received and the greater part of it spent for Belgian relief, according to a statement issued in New York by the commission for relief in Belgium.

One hundred and ten thousand tons of foodstuffs, cargo for twenty ships, are now on the way to American seaports from interior points, the statement adds.

Nearly sixty cargoes of foodstuffs, valued at more than $20,000,000, had been sent to Rotterdam up to the middle of March by the commission.

New Way to Hunt the Coyote.

Hunting coyotes on motor cycles is a popular sport in Sherman County, Kan. A party of ten young men went coyote hunting in this manner from there, and in one day succeeded in capturing three of the prairie pests.

New Attachment for Razor.

A Canadian inventor had secured a patent on which appears to be a simple attachment for converting an ordinary razor into one of the safety type.

The device consists simply of a piece of springy sheet metal folded so that it may be slipped over the razor blade. By holding the razor so that the side of the attachment comes in contact with the face, the right angle for the blade is attained.

Girl's Foot Worth $14,000.

Fourteen thousand dollars was the price set on the right foot of a seven-year-old girl of Kenosha, Wis. A jury in the circuit court awarded that sum to Minnie Extra, daughter of a Kenosha laborer. A car on the Chicago & Milwaukee Electric Railway had mangled her foot so that amputation at the ankle was necessary.

Dog Politician Aids Master.

Joseph B. Steele, Independent candidate for the mayoralty nomination at the primaries in Granite City, Mo., has no "houn' dawg" to aid him, but a devoted political worker in "Queen," a bright little terrier. He picked up the dog on the streets recently and gave it a home.

In way of repayment, the dog trotted about the town carrying in its mouth a card bearing Steele's picture and an announcement of his candidacy. According to Steele, the dog is so intelligent that on meeting a doubtful voter it rises on its hind legs to call the sign more emphatically to his attention. The dog campaigner attracted much interest in Granite City.

Steele obtained the idea of enlisting Queen from the dog's fondness for retrieving sticks and carrying objects about in its mouth. After a short training in carrying the card, the animal showed a remarkable enthusiasm for politics.

This Boat Travels on Land.

The visitor to the lumber districts of Canada may occasionally see what is to him a very remarkable sight—a primitive-looking steamboat high and dry on a road, crawling along quite comfortably, apparently just as much at home as in its natural element.

These boats are known as "alligators," and are used for towing the rafts of logs down the rivers and lakes to the mills. Sometimes it is desired to transfer one of these craft to a new sphere of operations, which can only be reached overland, and the boat is then hauled out of the water, placed upon rollers, and travels to its destination by means of its own power.

"Dead" Fifty-two Years, Still Alive.

After being mourned as dead for fifty-two years, John Wesley Franse, a Civil War veteran, has been found living in a small town near San Francisco, according to a letter received by relatives in St. Louis, Mo. Franse was found by his sister, Mrs. William H. Marvin, of Kirkwood, a St. Louis suburb.

Franse served in the Confederate army under General Sterling Price. The entire regiment to which he belonged was captured and placed in the Union prison at Alton, Ill. Believing that he had died there, members of the Franse family for more than fifty years visited the Alton cemetery each Decoration Day and placed flowers on one of the unmarked Confederate graves.

At a social in Los Angeles recently Mrs. Marvin mentioned that her maiden name was Franse. Another guest said he knew an old man near by that name, and the search followed which resulted in the finding of the long-lost veteran.

Found in a Pound of Raisins.

One pound of raisins purchased from a store in Derry Church, Pa., by a special agent of the dairy and food commission was analyzed by State Chemist Charles la Wall. He found: Prunes, rice, beans, and fuzzy dirt; human and animal hairs, straight and curly; fibers of cotton and wool dyed green, yellow, brown, pink, and gray; straw and a little bit of bran, sand, cornstarch, broken wheat, and yeast spores; pine wood and fragments of unidentified other timber; tobacco leaf, cigarette paper, and cigarette tobacco. Also, the wings and legs of a few unfortunate insects. Otherwise the raisins were all right. The groceryman was arrested.

McManus Sisters in Doubt.

That adequate reparation for the murder of John E. McManus, the former Chicagoan, killed on his ranch outside of Mexico City, would not be exacted by the United States government is the belief expressed by his two sisters living in Chicago. They have taken the matter up with a number of Chicago Congressmen.

"I doubt if a proper indemnity will ever be paid

Mrs. McManus," said Miss Elizabeth McManus, when seen with her sister, Mrs. Mary Dorgan. "And it seems as if the matter of bringing the murderers to justice would also be allowed to lapse, as in other cases. Outrages were committed against the sisters of the Sacred Heart in Mexico City, and I find the state department did nothing further than to complain to the Mexican government."

A letter from Counselor Lansing informed Miss McManus the Brazilian minister had placed the "full facts" before the new minister of Mexican foreign affairs.

This Potato King is a "Jap."

Reading a story of the visit of George Shima, the potato king of Lodi, Cal., to Los Angeles, in a paper of that city, merchants of Lodi recall that not many years ago the Japanese capitalist could not obtain credit in the stores of this city, not because he was not honest, but as a newcomer he had not established credit.

Those business men who refused to trust him did not anticipate that in a few years Shima would control 37,000 acres in California and have 6,000 acres in his own holdings, and have established a large account in California banks.

Last July Shima owned about a quarter of the 4,000,000 sacks of potatoes in California, and to-day he owns half of the 500,000 sacks unsold in the State.

Ready for the Golden Shore.

William Reid, a negro, who has lived in Red Bank, N. J., since he was mustered out of the Union army in 1865, celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday and vouchsafed the information that he had made preparations for a pleasant funeral.

He told his friends he dug his own grave in Whiteridge Cemetery, South Eatontown, four years ago, and that a slab now covers the space which he some day expects to fill.

During his spare moments he has constructed his own coffin, and this is stored with Reid's favorite undertaker. Reid told his friends that while he was ready for the golden shore, he didn't care how long the storage charges continued.

Unique Fire Tower in Forest.

Harry Childers, of La Pine, Ore., has been appointed fire guard by the forest service for the Rosland ranger station. The lookout at this station is one of the most unique in the State, being a 250-foot tower built on a big yellow pine. The trunk of the tree is divided about twenty feet from the ground and forms two parallel supports for the tower up to a height of nearly 200 feet. The lookout station on the top of the tower sways from two to ten feet in the wind.

Forty-one Years Postmaster.

John K. Gaither, for forty-one years postmaster at La Center, Wash., a few miles northeast of Ridgefield, will retire from the service as soon as Patrick M. Kane, recently appointed, can file his bond and get his commission.

Mr. Gaither, who is seventy-six years old, came west from Indiana in the year of 1873, and the following year was appointed postmaster. When he took over the La Center post office, there were only four patrons who subscribed for newspapers. Mr. Gaither is hale and hearty and active in several societies.

Jailer's Order Kicked Back.

For permitting a prisoner to leave the jail before completing the reading of three chapters in the Bible, Jack Sheehan, warden of the city prison, in Johnston, Pa., was sentenced by Mayor Joseph Cauffel to read the same three chapters of the book of Corinthians. Sheehan did it.

J. R. Edwards had appeared before the mayor on a charge of having imbibed too freely. He was sentenced to read the three chapters aloud, and Warden Sheehan was delegated to listen to see that the sentence was fully complied with. Sheehan could not stand the prisoner's reading and told him to go, it is alleged. Sheehan was then sentenced to do the reading.

Kentucky Woman, 112.

"Aunt Crissie" Stallard, who is probably the most noted woman in Kentucky, has just celebrated her one-hundred-and-twelfth birthday, and is still hale and hearty. "Aunt Crissie" was born in West Virginia and came to Kentucky at the age of twenty, and married James Stallard that same year. Her husband died twenty years later.

This aged woman has outlived all of her children except one who has been helpless for years. She is still living on her farm, near Hilliard, where she lived in 1823. She does all her own work—milking, gardening, getting her own firewood, just as she did back in the old days.

Her neighboring friends have offered to supply her with plenty of coal, but thus far she has repeatedly refused their offers. Aunt Crissie has a farm of 240 acres of land, with mineral and timber on it. Companies have offered large sums of money for the farm, but her reply is always the same: "I will never sell so long as I can provide for myself."

Through High School at Ten.

Whitesburg, Ky., can perhaps boast of the youngest high-school graduate in the State. Miss Grace Newman, ten years old, daughter of Attorney J. H. Newman, of that place, is the heroine. Having entered the high-school examination at Whitesburg, and averaging among the best, she received her diploma and a good compliment. She is exceedingly small for one of her age.

Traded a Colt for 160 Acres.

Charles Watson, of Fort Scott, Kan., swapped a two-year-old colt for 160 acres of land in 1856, and the man rode the colt away because he feared Watson would go back on the deal. To-day the land is worth at least $16,000, and "Uncle Charlie," as Watson is familiarly called, is rich. He is a veteran of the Civil War.

Thousand Killed in Mines.

More than 1,000 lives were lost in and about the mines of Pennsylvania in 1914, according to statistics made public by the state department of mines. Six hundred men and boys were killed in the anthracite mines—a reduction of twenty-four, compared with 1913—and 413 lost their

lives in the bituminous regions—a decrease of 198, compared with the previous year.

The total production of coal in the State was 237,251,835 tons. The anthracite output amounted to 91,367,305 tons, a decrease of 259,659 compared with 1913, and the bituminous production was 145,884,530 tons, a decrease of 27,081,129 tons compared with the previous year. The number of persons employed in and about the mines last year was 376,831.

Some Quaint Tricks of the Numeral Nine.

There are some curious facts and fancies connected with numbers. The number nine is, perhaps, the first as regards such experiments, although number seven is more prominent in literature and history. When you once use it you can't get rid of it. It will turn up again, no matter what you do to put it "down and out."

All through the multiplication table the product of nine comes to nine. No matter what you multiply with or how many times you repeat or change the figures, the result is always the same.

For instance, twice nine equals eighteen; add eight and one, and you have nine. Three times nine equals twenty-seven; two and seven make nine again. Go on until you try eleven times nine equals ninety-nine. This seems to bring an exception. But add the digits—nine and nine make eighteen; and again, one and eight make nine. Go on to an indeterminable extent and the thing continues. Take any number at random. For example, 450 times nine equals 4,050, and the digits, added, make nine once more. Take 6,000 times 9, equals, 54,000, and again you have five and four.

Take any rows of figures, reverse the order, and subtract the lesser from the greater—the difference will certainly be always nine or a multiple of nine. For example, 5,071 minus 1,705 equals 3,366. Add these digits and you have eighteen, and one and eight make the familiar nine.

You have the same result no matter how you raise the numbers by squares and cubes.

One more way is given by which number nine shows its strange powers. Write down any number you please, add its digits, and then subtract the sum of said digits from the original number. No matter what numbers you start with, the sum of the digits in the answer will be nine.

Try these experiments, and you will be delighted with the exact manner in which they prove the statement. Some quaint puzzles have been made based on these fixed principles.

Launch New United States Ship in June.

The new superdreadnaught *Arizona* will be launched early in June. As soon as it takes the water, preparations will begin for the laying of the keel of the still greater superdreadnaught *California*. The launching of the *Arizona* is expected to prove one of the greatest naval celebrations in the history of New York.

Ninety-pound Voter, Still in Knee Pants.

John Smith, of Recluse, Miss., still in knee pants and weighing a little less than ninety pounds, is the smallest voter in the South. John attained his majority a few days ago and hastened to the depot for a ticket to Gulfport, the county seat, to get out his registration papers and be qualified as a full-sized man voter.

When he asked for the ticket, the agent handed him a child's half-fare one. John was set back at this, but remarked that the agent didn't know anything anyway. He would show them something when he came back from Gulfport.

When the conductor passed him in the train and shouted "Ticket, sonny!" John wanted to fight, but again he managed to control himself.

When he entered the court clerk's office in Gulfport, he was asked:

"Want an errand boy's job, kiddo?"

"No, dog-gone it," yelled John, "I want to register."

"The deuce you do," shouted the clerk. But John submitted birth-registration papers and took oath as to his age. He was registered and now had the right to vote. His chest swelled.

Just at that time the candidate for next term of court clerk entered and said, "Hello, kid." "Now, that's where you lost a vote," answered John indignantly. The candidate apologized when he learned the facts.

John, with his ninety pounds, knee pants, and registration papers, went back to Recluse. He now struts about the town discussing the tariff, the effect of the Mexican situation on the chances of the Democratic party, and everything his father talks about. And he doesn't stand for any "kidding" about it, either.

Man Shows a Prophetic Egg.

J. P. Edwards was in Piggott, Ark., recently, showing a curious egg one of his hens laid the day before, and the exhibit surely aroused the most profound wonderment. The egg is an ordinary one in shape and size, but on the surface of the snow-white shell there appear to be faint maps of the eastern and western hemispheres. North and South America are intact, except a part of the extreme southern point, the Gulf of Mexico and Panama Canal being plainly shown.

On the eastern hemisphere everything looks as though having been torn by cyclonic winds and in danger of being scattered to the "four corners of the earth," wherever they are.

Some say this freak egg is simply one result of the European war, earthquakes, land monopoly, et cetera. Those who are of prophetic vision see "signs" in this egg which prognosticate the future face of the world.

Girl Plumber-Butcher Quits Her Laundry.

"Cattle are more interesting than clothes," says Miss Allie Pitts, of Eureka Springs, Ark., who has forsaken the butcher business to run a laundry. Miss Pitts is twenty-seven years old. She was accustomed to killing her own cattle and hogs when she was in the meat business. This summer she plans to quit the laundry, buy a cattle ranch, and ship her own stock to market.

Before she became a butcher Miss Pitts was a plumber. At an age when most girls are giggling over beaus and party dresses, this mountain girl was repairing broken water pipes and defective drains.

"I guess it's because I'm just naturally odd," she says bashfully when asked how she came to choose such odd professions. "I went to keeping books in a meat shop, and one day when the butcher was taken sick I offered to

take his place. Then I bought a shop of my own in Granby, Mo. With the help of a man I employed I did all my own butchering, cutting up the beef, and rendering the lard. I knocked the animals in the head as they came down the runway. Oh, yes, I hated it at first, but I soon got used to it. Some way I hated worst to kill the hogs.

"Cattle are interesting," she continued musingly; "much more interesting than clothes. I'm going back into the cattle business."

The restrictions of corsets, high heels, and frills are unknown to this wholesome mountain girl. She dresses very plainly in a short, dark skirt, mannish waist and tie, and knockabout hat. She has mild blue eyes, curling dark hair, and talks with a little lisp.

Edison Will Make Benzol.

Another step for the manufacture of benzol in this country has been taken. Thomas A. Edison has opened a factory in Johnstown, Pa., for the manufacture of benzol from coal gas, a process never before developed in this country.

Carbolic acid and aniline dyes are made from benzol, which heretofore has come chiefly from Germany. Since the war there has been a great shortage of this product, and chemists and manufacturers have given much attention to producing it in this country. Recently Secretary of the Interior Lane announced that Doctor Rittman, one of the department's chemists, had discovered a method of producing benzol from petroleum, and this week he announced that he had made arrangements with a manufacturing firm to use the Rittman method.

Rancher Battles with Trapped White Wolf.

John S. Sherrod, the rancher near Glenwood Springs, Col., who caught a huge white wolf in his traps near Fruita, was in Glenwood Springs and admitted having experienced a very thrilling time in connection with the wolf, and the near loss of his life in the Grand River.

The wolf was caught on the south side of the Grand River, and Sherrod had to cross in a boat. When landing on the north bank, the wolf sprang at the trapper, who grappled with the beast in order to save his life. The strain on the chain attached to the trap was too much with the two pulling on it, and it gave way, allowing the wolf and his captor to drop into the river, which is quite swift at this point.

Sherrod was almost drowned in his efforts to keep the wolf's head under water, but he finally succeeded in besting the animal, which he pulled out on the bank and killed with a club.

The wolf's pelt is worth one hundred dollars, and Sherrod seems to think he earned every cent of it.

Some Facts You May Not Know.

Among the rare specimens not open to public inspection in the Harvard Zoölogical Museum is what is asserted to be the largest frog in the world. It weighs about six pounds, is twenty-seven inches long from tip to toe, and of a slaty-black color. Its web feet are equal in size to those of a large swan. Only three of its kind have ever reached the United States.

The smallest cows in the world are found in the Samoan Islands. The average weight does not exceed 150 pounds, while the bulls weigh about 200 pounds. They are about the size of merino sheep.

The Siamese have a superstitious dislike of odd numbers, and they studiously strive to have in their own houses an even number of windows, doors, rooms, and cupboards.

There is a tribe of Indians in Mexico whose language is limited to about 300 words and who cannot count more than ten.

Next to the United States, Germany has the greatest number of telegraph offices and the largest line mileage.

Sugar exists in the sap of about 190 plants and trees.

The Chinese pupil reciting his lesson turns his back on the tutor.

Warships taking refuge in a neutral port are liable to be disarmed after twenty-four hours.

In some parts of Siberia milk is sold frozen around a piece of wood, which serves as a handle to carry it.

Herons, which average only four pounds in weight, often have been known to eat more than three pounds of fish at a meal.

In 1850 only one woman worked for wages to every ten men; now the ratio is one woman to four men.

His Second Fall Cures Him.

There was a man in our town,
And he was wondrous wise;
He jumped into a bramble bush
And scratched out both his eyes;
And when he saw his eyes were out
With all his might and main,
He jumped into the bramble bush
And scratched them in again.

W. J. Parker, a Corunna, Mich., lawyer, unwittingly took the part of the wise man in the Mother Goose story, with results as satisfactory as the tale sets forth. He recently slipped on an icy sidewalk and sustained a sprain of his ankle that compelled him to hobble about on crutches.

On a recent evening when he started down cellar to fix the furnace fire, he slipped and fell downstairs, and when he picked himself up, found his ankle was all right again and that he could walk without crutches and without pain.

Surgeons who examined the ankle say the first fall caused an obscure dislocation and that the second one reduced it. Parker has discarded the crutches permanently.

Has Lived Seventy-two Years on Same Farm Land.

Luman Owen, resident of Oak Grove, Wis., who has lived on the same farm seventy-two years, says he is the oldest living white person in Wisconsin who was born in the Badger State.

"My father came to Oak Grove, Dodge County, with his family and took up land from the government in the fall of 1842, which is seventy-two years this last fall," said Mr. Owen. "I have lived on that same land continuously ever since, and am the last survivor of the family of nine persons. However, this was not their first place of settlement in Wisconsin. They came to Waukesha in the fall of 1836, from Ogdensburg, N. Y., and were on a boat from the time they left Ogdensburg,

until they landed in Milwaukee, seven weeks and four days. They could have walked the distance in less time than that.

"My father took up land from the government in Waukesha, then called Prairieville, and there, in the spring of 1837, I was born. In 1842 our family moved to Dodge County, and again took up land from the government, the patents for which are signed by President James K. Polk. There was no homestead law in those days. Land had to be bought from the government at one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre.

"When we came here, this part of the country was wilderness, inhabited by wild animals and Indians, but it settled up fast, and as soon as people began to raise more than they wanted for their own use, the next thing was to get to market. We were sixty-five miles from Milwaukee, where all surplus farm products had to be hauled, and most invariably by an ox team, which was a long, tedious journey. If a man took in a load of produce to market and was fortunate enough to get a load of merchandise or immigrants or something of the kind to bring back, he would come out about even financially. But if he failed to get the load back, he would come home owing hotel bills along the road."

Man Who Dumped Brewery is Dead.

Reverend Abraham de Kack, one-time prosperous brewer, who emptied the contents of his brewing plant into Grand River and later became a Methodist minister, is dead in Ionia, Mich., of pneumonia.

De Kack, more generally known as "De Quack," and familiarly to his immediate circle of acquaintances as "Quackie," which appellation is by no means lacking in the respect that it would seemingly fail to convey, was once a brewer in Holland, and later a celery grower, and finally a preacher of the gospel.

It was many years ago that De Kack brewed beer—it was considered good beer, too—but when he saw the harm that alcohol does, even in small amounts, he at once went to his little brewery, discharged the help, opened up the spigots of the beer vats, and, at the loss of a small fortune to himself, drained all the beer into the sewers. Then he became a minister.

It was a habit of De Kack's to pay his hired help daily as far as possible, for he took seriously the biblical saying: "Owe no man." Martin Dows, of Grand Rapids, one of De Kack's employees, received his pay every night for twenty-nine years.

Old Nag Dies After Race.

After serving his master, Peter l'Heureux, of Marlboro, Mass., for the most of his twenty-six years of life, Mr. l'Heureux's faithful family horse, either out of shame because he was beaten or because he felt bad about putting his owner out of pocket, turned around and died after he had just lost the second straight out of three heats in a race against the equine owned by Joseph Chaput on the Lakeside Avenue Straightaway.

For some time there had been arguments between the two men relative to the merits of their horses as "steppers." It was decided to settle the matter. Bets were placed and all concerned repaired to the scene of contest. There were friends of both parties, probably 500 in all, assembled to see some free racing.

The distance was to be a quarter mile, best two heats out of three, and, after the stationing of officials, the race was on. L'Heureux's horse was beaten by a good ten yards in the first heat and was a bad second in the next sprint. The animal was just turned round by the driver and headed in the direction of home when it suddenly pitched out of the shafts—dead.

"Boy" Prisoner Proves to be Married Woman.

After fraternizing with men prisoners in the jail and sharing a cell with Robert Stewart for several months, "Frank A. Dawson," alias "Frank Morris," of Oklahoma, arrested in Sutton, W. Va., on a charge of burglary, was found to be a woman.

Dawson, who appeared to be a youth of sixteen years, sent a note to Jailer Hyer, when her case was to have been called in court, and informed him that she was in disguise.

Dawson's story was confirmed by a matron, and she further asserted that she is Mrs. Frank C. Dawson, of Clarksburg, and that she has a mother, brother, and a young child residing in that city.

Mrs. Dawson is a very pretty young woman. She and Stewart have occupied the same cell at night and she has daily associated with the other prisoners in the corridors. Stewart asserts that he was not aware of her sex.

According to the police, Dawson and Stewart are responsible for a number of daring burglaries in this vicinity, in which they are said to have made away with several thousand dollars' worth of jewelry and valuables.

Boy Risks Life for Thirty-five Cents.

While Lee Mills, nineteen years old, was returning to his home in Webb City, Mo., from a "movie" show, at a late hour, two rough-bearded men stepped from behind the corner of a building, each holding an automatic revolver, and commanded "Hands up!" Instead of complying, young Mills, who was carrying an umbrella, used the latter as a "spear" and attacked the two holdup men. They opened fire upon him, but Mills, undaunted, continued to use his stout umbrella until he had put both men to flight. They fired many shots at him, but only one took effect, striking him in the right arm and passing through the fleshy part, without breaking any bones.

When young Mills was taken to a hospital for treatment, the doctor, thinking his patient would have a considerable sum of money with him to have put up so fierce a fight against such odds, asked him if he wanted his valuables taken care of.

"Oh, no," replied Mills, "it isn't necessary, as I only have thirty-five cents," which statement proved true.

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